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COMIC FOUNDRY

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BELL**

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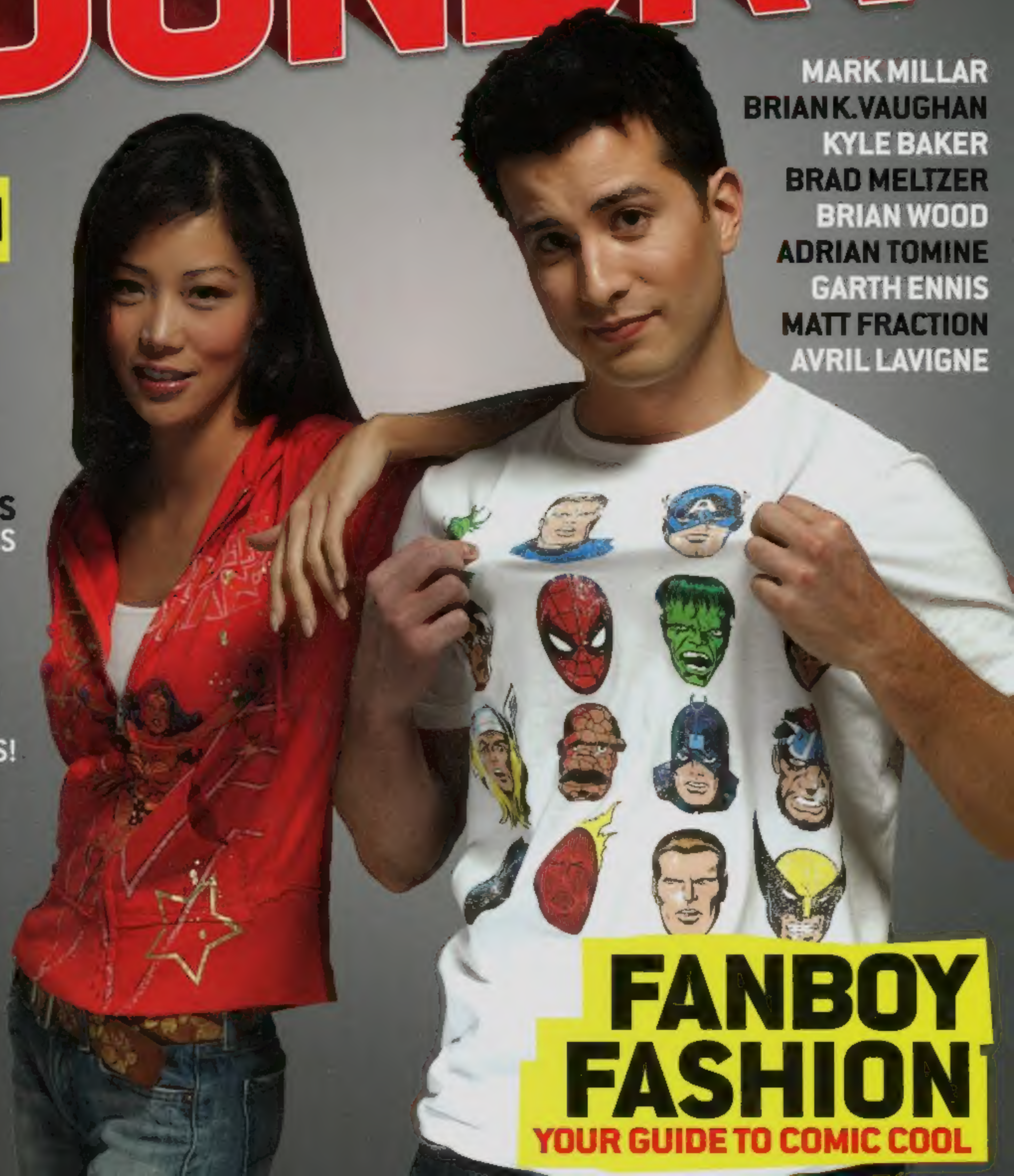
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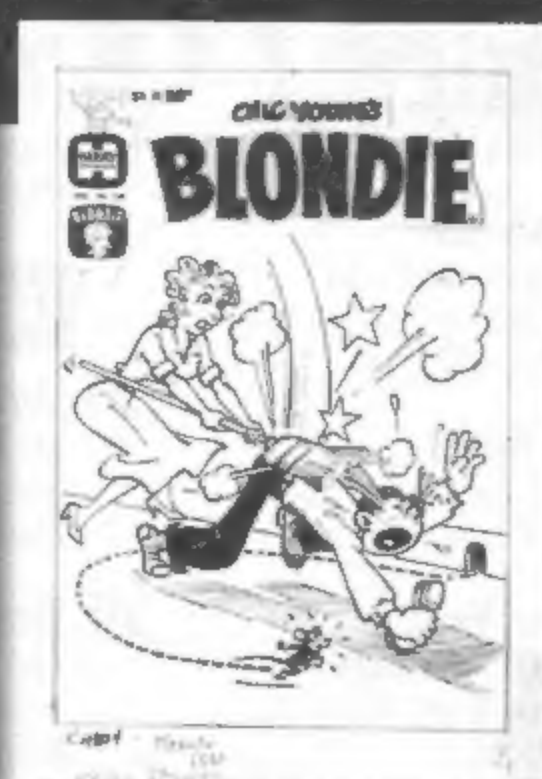
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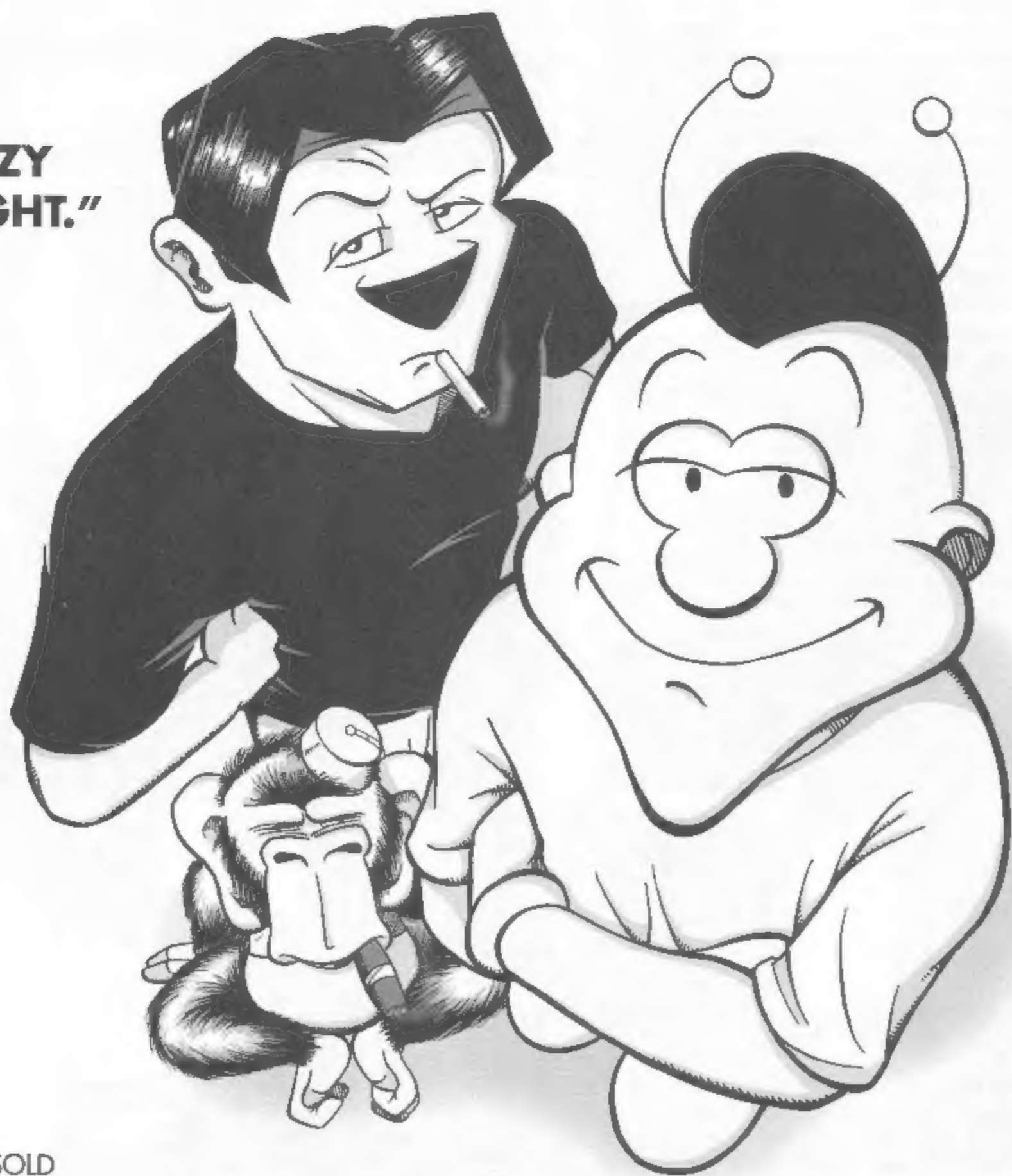
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FROM THE EDITOR

THIS MAGAZINE ALMOST

didn't happen. Halfway through production, Diamond Comics distributors gave us the no-go. That meant that getting this issue from my living room to your local comics shop became much more difficult. But thanks to an outpouring of support from readers like you, Diamond had a change of heart.

Along the way, many have asked whether there really is a place for another comics magazine. It's true there are a lot of mags out there, but none speak to me. Most assume readers are only the hardcore superheroes or the indie elite. Me? I'm somewhere in between, and I'm betting you are, too.

With Comic Foundry we deliver unique coverage of comics culture and take an outside-the-box approach to comics journalism. Specifically, we offer lifestyle stories — how comics relate to your everyday life. Like you, we're thinking about comics long after we put down the books. At home, while listening to music, making drinks, buying clothes — comics have a place in all of that.

That's why, in our Life & Style section (page 17), we feature comic artists who are musicians (page 22) and cool drink mixes that are named after superheroes (page 19). In our Costume section (page 31), you can read about how to upstage your friend in the Xavier Academy T-shirt with the coolest shirts and sneakers on the market.

But, of course, we cover more than just comic culture. Check out Long Box (page 7) for what to read and what you need in new comics. We've also got tons of celebrity coverage through the issue, including comic chats with Kristen Bell (page 54), Avril Lavigne (page 14) and Jonah Hill (page 11). And as far as wild cards go, check out my favorite feature in the issue, Life Imitates Art (page 46). I worked with photographer Vikram Tank to set up a photo shoot paying homage to some of our favorite black-and-white books, but in high fashion.

These are the types of stories you can't find anywhere else, and it's the type of coverage you deserve. After all, yes, we had some hurdles, but we couldn't have done without readers like you. So enjoy. This one's for you.

TIM LEONG

EDITOR IN CHIEF + ART DIRECTOR
tim@comicfoundry.com



Clockwise: Hair stylist Giovanni Guintoli works his magic on our models for our first fashion shoot. Photographer Vikram Tank tells me to stay out of his way.



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Share your thoughts by sending comments to letters@comicfoundry.com for inclusion in next issue's Letters page.

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CONTRIBUTORS

VIKRAM TANK, 26, Photographer

From: New York, N.Y.

In this issue: Tank was the man behind the camera in CF's fashion homage to black-and-white comics. You think coordinating a writer, penciler, inker and colorist is hard? Try organizing six models, a fashion stylist, a makeup artist and a hair stylist. Not to mention a meddling editor/art director (page 46).

In his words: "The shoot was a fantastic experience. We pulled some great talent to help us style and groom the models. The hardest part wasn't recreating the lighting, but finding a lens to mimic the camera angles on some of the pages — some of which just don't exist in real life."



HOLLY WRAY, 25, Copy editor

From: St. Louis, Mo.

In this issue: Wray had the tricky task of examining the issue's text for grammar, spelling and other mistakes.

In her words: "I've never picked up a comic book. I did, however, watch *Spider-Man 3*. *Lame*. Tell your friends to buy CF so the mag can stop paying me in jelly beans."



IAN BRILL, 24, Writer

From: San Francisco, Calif.

In this issue: The frequent analyst and writer for *Publishers Weekly Comics Week* went fiction for his first CF piece, with "Whatever" (page 43), a story about how comics can change your life.

In his words: "I love *Love & Rockets*. Both Jaime and Gilbert Hernandez tell stories that truly appreciate the dynamism, foolishness and beauty of life."



DANIELLE McCLURE, 27, Writer

From: New York, N.Y.

In this issue: McClure explored the world of nouvelle manga in her profile of mangaka Frédéric Boilet (page 60).

In her words: "I realize I've actually heard of him before. I was writing an art column a few years ago and some curator of an anime exhibit at a gallery was nuts for him."



MATT FRACTION, 32, Writer

From: Kansas City, Mo.

In this issue: The *Casanova* and *Punisher War Journal* author is more than just a writer — he's a lover. Fraction explained to Comic Foundry the right way to make love to Phonogram writer Kieron Gillen (page 23).

In his words: "My career model is, I always wanted to be like the Cohen brothers. Like Steven Soderbergh, where you've got a lot of control and you can do these kind of projects where sometimes they'd have great mainstream appeal, and other times they'd be these quirky little one-off things."



LAURA HUDSON, 26, Writer

From: New York, N.Y.

In this issue: What didn't she write? You can find Hudson's handiwork in our *Sex and Superheroes* feature (page 62), *Heroine Addict* (page 74), *Decorating with Comics* (page 17) and *Black Hole Casting Call* (page 21).

In her words: "My favorite comic is *Finder*. It's more than just a comic book, it's a fiction of literary richness — a vibrant, living world where anthropology, aboriginal fantasy and cyberpunk sci-fi collide with an emotional and artistic depth that astounds."

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I KILLED ADOLF HITLER
Norwegian cartoonist Jason and his new comedy. **page 15**



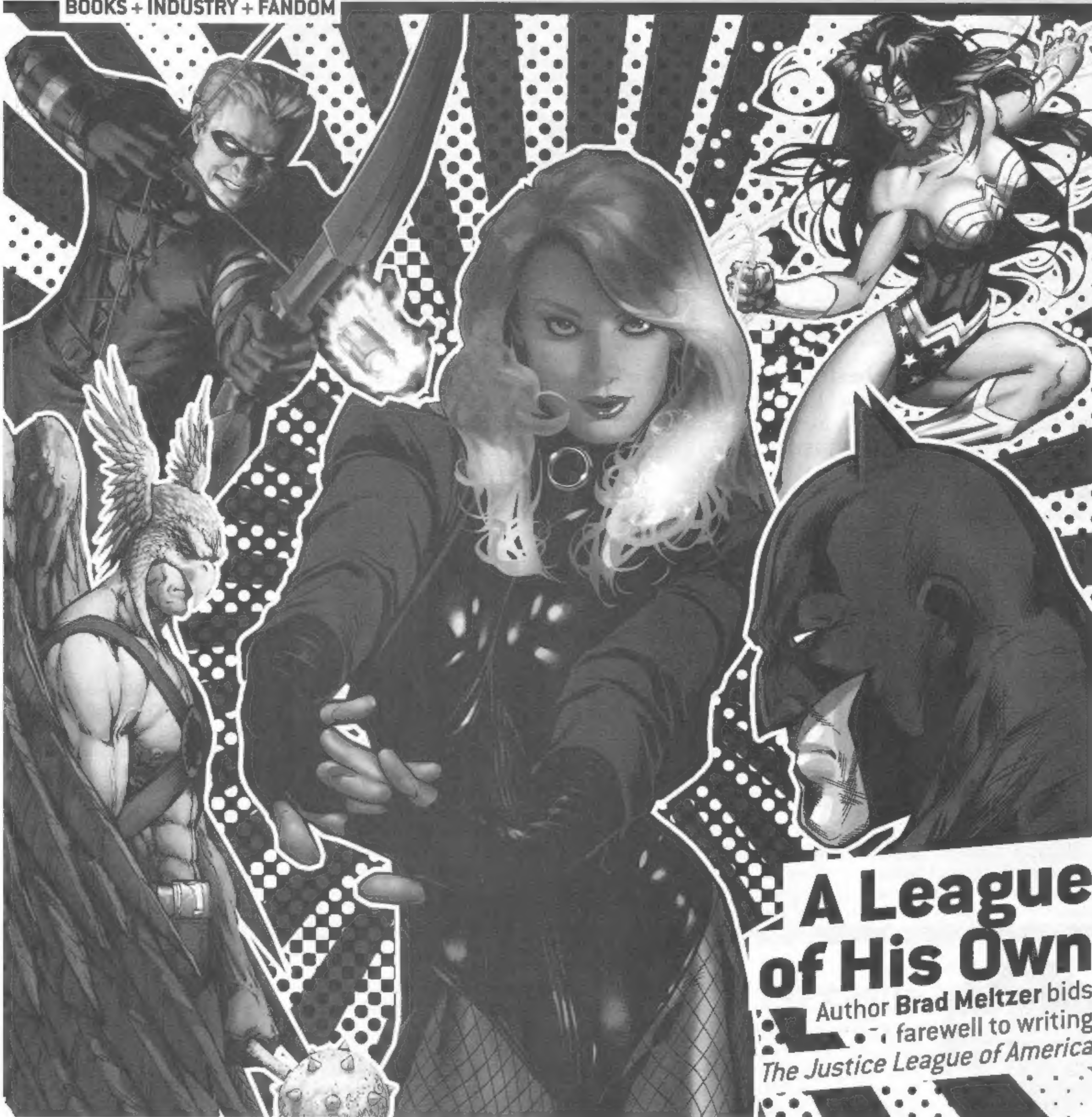
MANGA MANIA
Get ready for three new Naruto books each month. **page 12**



SEX SCENE OR COMIC COVER?
Some of this summer's covers that make you go "Hmm..." **page 15**

LONG BOX

BOOKS + INDUSTRY + FANDOM



A League of His Own

Author **Brad Meltzer** bids farewell to writing *The Justice League of America*

JUSTICE LEAGUE: IMAGE; SCOTT BATES; DOCTOR B: JEFFREY COOPER; SPIDER-MAN: MARVEL; COMICS: MARVEL; COURTESY OF VIZ MEDIA



It was *New York Times* best-selling author Brad Meltzer's childhood fantasy to write *The Justice League*. Last year, he finally got the chance. Now, one year later (pun intended), Meltzer finishes his run and takes one last lookback before leaving the Hall of Justice.

You wrote all 12 issues before the first issue hit stands. How did that affect your writing?

I think it's far more pure — and that has nothing to do with whether it's better or worse. To this day, the best part of comics is the access readers have to creators, but that's also a trap. And I've seen far too many modern writers start to water themselves down in some attempt to please their readership. Everyone wants to be liked.

When you sat down, did you see the big picture or did you break it down one story at a time?

I attack each plot separately but always have the overall theme lurking in the back of my brain.

As for the crossover — even that, we knew it before I started, even if we didn't know every detail.

The first comic you ever read was *JLA* #150 — it's almost fitting you got to relaunch the League. My childhood dream come true.

Was there any evolution in your writing from issue 1 to 12?

I hope so. Certainly, characters like Vixen and Roy started elbowing in more. Also, my approach to team dynamics changed.

How much input did DC have on the relaunch?

They left me alone. Creatively, they've been incredible.

Obviously you had a good time writing this. What was your biggest geek-out moment?

Seeing the Hall for the first time. I almost yelled out loud.

EVERY CHARACTER SURPRISES YOU IF YOU LISTEN CLOSELY ENOUGH.

It really seems like identity was a theme you were trying to convey through the whole series. Why is that important to this *JLA*?

Every character in every issue is struggling with it — from the

heroes to the villains, from Vixen to Roy to Geo-Force to Red Tornado to the Big Three (who need to understand they're not always the center of this universe, even if they sometimes are). The reason you join a team is usually unselfish. But you always get something from it.

You're meticulous with the research of your novels. What digging did you have to do for *JLA*?
Old comics — so many of which are in my brain.

How do you think the tone you've set interacts with the current tone of the comics industry?

That's for others to judge. I think we hit most of what's out there now: long stories, short stories, pure action and quiet characterization. In the end, I just hope we earn what we ask of our characters. Every story needs to earn its emotion.

What was the hardest part of writing your *JLA* run?

The hardest part is trying to find a moment where the entire team gets to fight together. It seems so easy and logical, but in reality, anything they all tried to take down? They'd take it down in two seconds.

Did any characters not turn out the way you expected after you first sat down and plotted this out?

Hawkgirl surprised me. So did the long-lasting effects on Red Tornado. Every character surprises you if you listen closely enough.

What were you able to take away from *Identity Crisis* that prepared you to do *JLA*?

To be honest, I think the earlier the work, the more honest it is.

What's the most important thing you learned since entering the comics industry?

Every character is someone's favorite.

—TIM LEONG

FOUNDRY
FAVORITE

SUPER SPY by Matt Kindt, Aug. 2007 (Top Shelf Comix)

Why it's cool: Kindt spent a year posting a weekly spy story on his website (supersecretspy.com), and now Top Shelf Comix brings them all together in one nicely designed package. Each yarn stands alone, but together each puzzle piece forms a giant story of intrigue, cyanide pills, pen guns, secret messages in children's books and ultimately, redemption.

—JK PARKIN



BRIAN K. VAUGHAN
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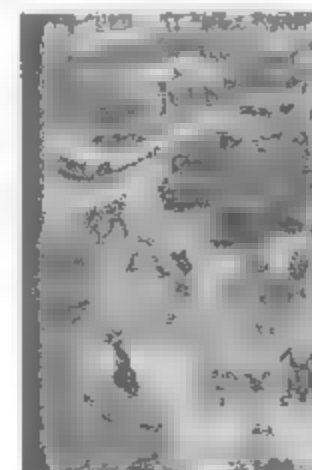
Scott Pilgrim,
by Bryan Lee O'Malley
(Oni Press)

"This is the book that's come out most recently that I'm just crazy about. I think it's a book that anyone in our generation can fall in love with."



Preacher, by Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon
(Vertigo)

"This is one of those classics right up there with *Watchmen* and *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*."

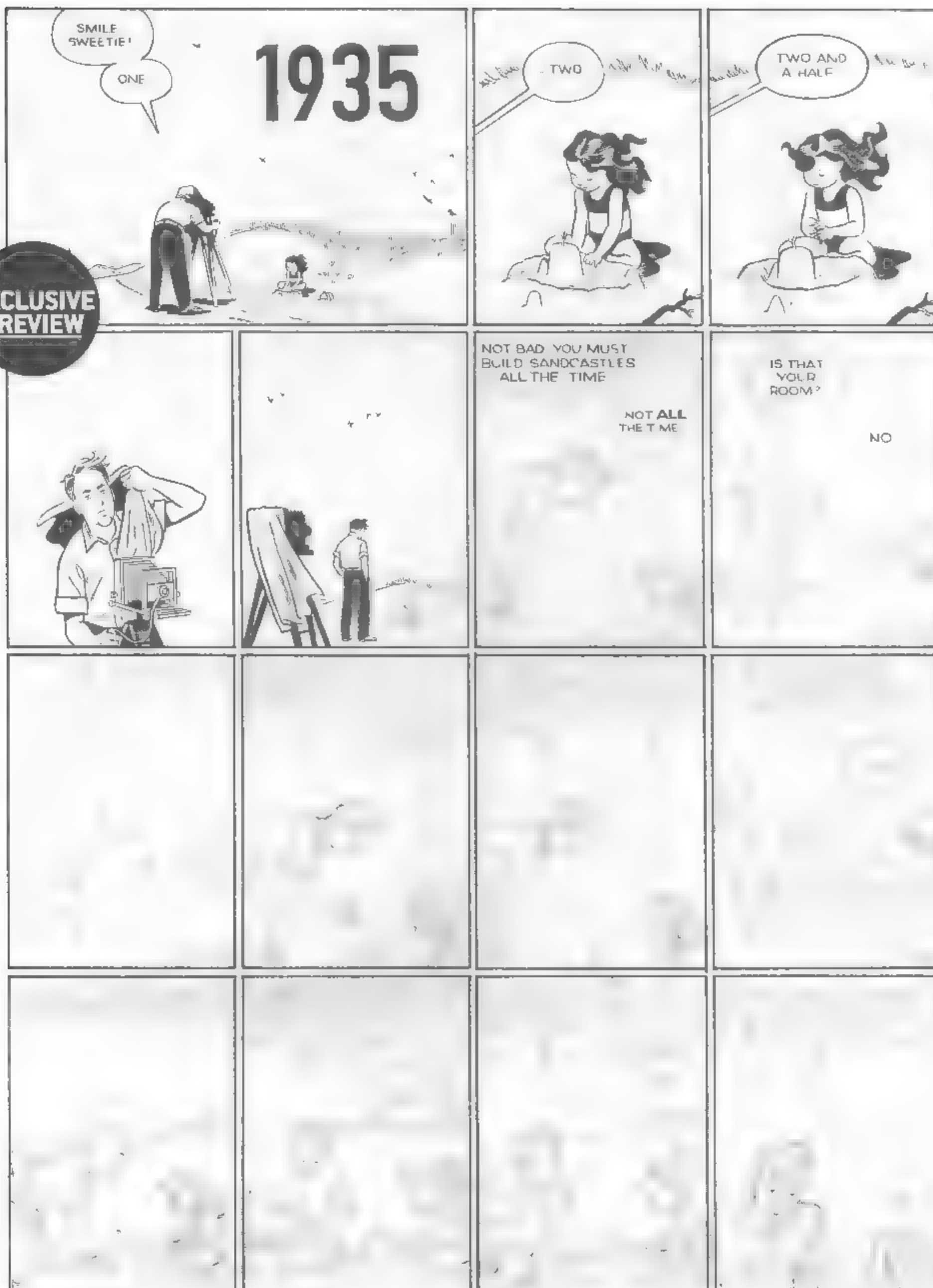


Palestine, by Joe Sacco
(Fantagraphics)

"He's not just one of the best cartoonists, but also one of the best journalists. This is a great book to give to someone who maybe doesn't really know what comics are capable of."

AS TOLD TO TIM LEONG

EXCLUSIVE
PREVIEW



R. Kikuo Johnson's Next Book

His sophomore effort after his award winning *Night Fisher*

After winning the 2006 Russ Manning Award for Most Promising Newcomer, R. Kikuo Johnson is tackling a loose biography of deceased outsider artist Morton Bartlett. When Bartlett died in 1992, an estate lawyer discovered 15 plaster children Bartlett obsessively sculpted in his free time along with carefully staged photographs of the dolls in what some might call sexually provocative situations. The work was put on the market, and some eventually sold to the Metropolitan Museum of Art among other notable museums. "On one hand, it's a retelling of the Pygmalion myth," Johnson says, "but it's also just dripping with that same weird reverted childhood fetishism inherent in the air at comic shops and designer toy stores."

—ALAN HUGHES

Overdue Books

A status report on the most-hyped books that are still MIA.

Remember when you read that announcement last year that blew your mind — your favorite writer doing that book with your favorite artist — and then there were no mentions of the book anywhere? Comic Foundry tracked down some of the big announcements to figure out why those books are yet to see the light of day.

—TIM LEONG



GO AHEAD,
GEEK OUT



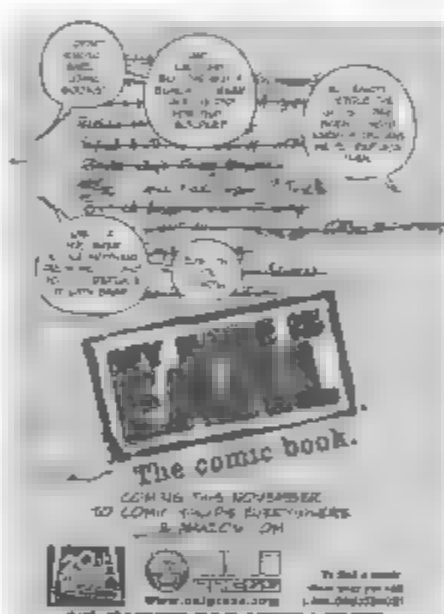
MINIMATES

Keep telling yourself size doesn't matter with wave six of the DC Minimates set. Available Nov. 2007, \$9.99



MARK MILLAR'S 1985

First touted as a fumetti — a comic with photographs instead of drawings, *1985* is about a mentally troubled boy who starts seeing Marvel villains in his hometown. Millar finished the script for the series and claimed Marvel invested millions and hired nearly 100 actors so the book could debut in summer '06. The first issue, however, didn't look up to snuff, so Marvel decided to shelve the photo idea and hire artist Tommy Lee Edwards to illustrate instead. **VERDICT:** Millar said he expects it to launch late this summer, but he's been known to overhype. Even though there's progress with the book, don't expect to see *1985* in 2007.



MY NAME IS EARL

Originally one of the marquee announcements of the 2006 Comic-Con International in San Diego, Oni Press revealed they scored the rights to publish a comic adaptation of the hit show, *My Name Is Earl*. Artist Dean Trippe was attached to draw the book, but after the initial announcement, all was silent on the Oni front in terms of release dates. **VERDICT:** Consider this project canceled until show creator Greg Garcia has time to devote to the book. Which probably won't be for a long while. Damn karma.



JONATHAN LETHEM'S OMEGA THE UNKNOWN

Acclaimed novelist and comic enthusiast Lethem signed on with Marvel in 2005 to revive the unusual '70s superhero book, *Omega the Unknown*. Originally planned to debut in early 2006, the book was unexpectedly pushed back because Lethem won a MacArthur Fellowship grant. Art-wise, however, things have been slow but smooth as Farel Dalrymple has released a preview cover image. **VERDICT:** Lethem has finished writing more than half of the 10-issue series, so it shouldn't be too much longer. Even though things look good for a 2007 release, the final date is, well, unknown.



BRYAN SINGER'S ULTIMATE X-MEN

Back in 2004 when *X2* director Bryan Singer was still attached to direct *X3*, Marvel announced they'd locked the A-lister to pen a 12-issue run on *Ultimate X-Men*. But because of scheduling problems, it's been pushed back several years. Singer had reportedly been co-writing the book with his *X2* scribes, and then later with Brian K. Vaughan. The art status is just as fuzzy, given that *Civil War* artist Steve McNiven originally was attached to draw the book, and Marc Andreyko's name has been mentioned as a co-writer. **VERDICT:** Marvel is determined to keep this one around, no matter how long it takes. And with Singer's schedule, that could be a while.

FOUNDRY
FAVORITE

ROBOT



ROBOT DREAMS

by Sara Varon
Aug. 2007 (First Second Books)

Why it's cool: First Second has a knack for bringing out the best in talented creators. Varon, a children's book author, crafts this tale of a day at the beach gone wrong. Like her 2003 book *Sweater Weather*, expect this seemingly cute tale of a robot and a dog to have bite.

—JK PARKIN

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CELEBRITY SPOTLIGHT



JONAH HILL

Superbad's Jonah Hill on good comics

I've heard that you dig comics.

Oh yeah

What is your favorite comic series or your favorite superhero?

Um, it's probably Batman. I think *Dark Knight Returns* is probably my favorite comic

I just finished reading that the other day.

How awesome is it?

I really liked it. It's not my favorite, but I thought it was really good.

It's pretty good, I mean, I like *Punisher* a lot and I love — there are these books called *Scott Pilgrim*. And the first one is called *Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life*, and it's written by this guy Bryan Lee O'Malley. And those are probably my favorite comics right now. And I also love — *Infinity Gauntlet*'s pretty rad. Have you read that one?

No, I haven't read that.

It's pretty cool. And um, anything that Archie is in ... (laughs) Anything Archie and Jughead, their whole gang

Thoughts about doing the movie adaptation? Or is that already in the works?

Oh yeah, I'm playing Veronica in the movie adaptation of *Archie* (laughs) I'm gonna win an Oscar dude, playing Veronica. It's going to be my first role in drag.

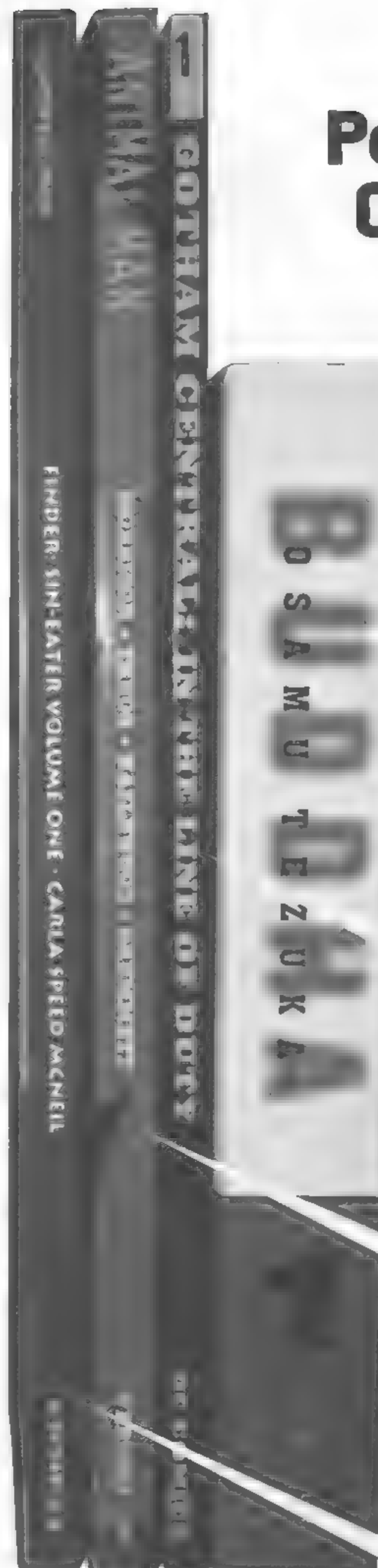
Ah.

It's like a cross between Archie and *The Joy Luck Club*

You better hurry up with that — John Travolta's doing the mother character in *Hairspray*. It seems like every guy is doing drag now, so if you wanna stand out, better hop to it.

Ah, well I'm gonna be in *Look Who's Talking Right Now* so Travolta better watch out. Yeah, I don't know. It's funny, I can't wait to see that

—JUSTIN MONROE



Buddha, by Osamu Tezuka (Vertical)

It's difficult for most Westerners to imagine an irreverent tone in the biography of a religious figure, but in the epic eight-volume *Buddha*, Osamu Tezuka uses it without ever seeming disrespectful. That's not to say his retelling of the life of Prince Siddhartha Gautama isn't a serious work. It most certainly is: Tezuka masterfully explores politics, class, justice, philosophy, love and death. Still, he's not above visual gags, crude and sometimes anachronistic humor, and the occasional inside joke (look for Tezuka's cameo).

Gotham Central, by Ed Brubaker, Greg Rucka and Michael Lark (DC Comics)

Gotham City's police department has long played an important, though rarely central, part in the Batman comics, serving alternately as the Caped Crusader's ally and adversary. But then, in 2002, writers Ed Brubaker and Greg Rucka and artist Michael Lark introduced us to this intelligent, often-gritty police procedural in which the detectives of the Major Crimes Unit are the stars. It's like *NYPD Blue*, only the perps wear spandex and the police operate in the long shadow of the Bat

Animal Man, by Grant Morrison, Chas Truog and Doug Hazlewood (DC Comics)

Grant Morrison's first series for DC contains all the hallmarks of his later works: revitalized C-list superheroes, Silver Age quirkiness, meta commentary and "self-aware" characters. Morrison transformed Buddy Baker from a 1960s footnote into the star of one of the most important comics of the late '80s — one that helped to lay the foundation for the Vertigo imprint. He also, perhaps inadvertently, started the trend of superheroes wearing Members Only-style jackets over their costumes.

Finder, by Carla Speed McNeil (Lightspeed Press)

Carla Speed McNeil's award-winning "aboriginal science fiction" series is a wonder of world-building, as the creator envisions a future Earth where less technologically advanced, indigenous cultures — both human and nonhuman — live side by side with sprawling industrialized cities. But don't mistake *Finder* for an empty exercise in fantasy world construction. McNeil uses the rich setting as a backdrop for her exploration of Western culture, social mores, religion, family and so much more.

Father of The Boys

Legendary comics scribe Garth Ennis sheds light on his dark series.

The Boys certainly isn't your first venture into the darker side of things. What are you trying to do creatively that you've yet to do before?

If I had to sum it up in one line, it's an attempt to write honestly about superhero characters and the superhero genre.

In brainstorming for The Boys, have you had any ideas where you thought, 'Whoa, that's too far?'

I've wondered about a couple of things, but they're going in anyway.

What's the most misunderstood aspect of The Boys?

I don't read much or indeed any criticism, but at a guess, I'd say something like, 'It's

just a lot of violence and perversion for its own sake.' To which my answer would either be, 'Then don't read it,' or 'Give it another try when all 60 issues are out. See how you get on with it then.'

THERE'S A RICH VEIN OF HUMOR TO BE MINED.

Your writing is pretty prolific — how do you think you've evolved as a writer during your career and how does that affect The Boys?

That's for the readers to say. I tend to let my work develop as its own pace, in directions that feel right, rather than indulging in overt self-analysis.

How does comedy work when you're writing a story like this?

It's unavoidable. To me, superheroes are never far from comedy anyway. I was once told, by a slightly exasperated DC editor, that I should 'try and allow these characters their dignity.' Quite right: to script a mainstream superhero book successfully, I think you have to do exactly that. Suspension of

disbelief can be a fragile thing, but once you shatter it in this particular genre, there's a rich vein of humor to be mined.

What's the most important thing you've learned since entering the comics industry?

To trust my own judgment. Damn the torpedoes, bollocks to the naysayers, and keep straight on till morning.

—TE WANNAMAKER



The Boys is available from Dynamite Entertainment.



FOUND IN TRANSLATION

Prep yourself for 12 issues of **Naruto** in the next three months

Look for even more metal headbands at comic conventions Starting in September, Viz Media is changing the release schedule of the chart-topping manga *Naruto* from every other month to three times a month

Viz will keep the new schedule of three books a month through December, when book 27 hits stands. After that, there will be a big change in plot, as the story will speed ahead two-and-a-half years.

The reasoning behind the change: Viz can speed up the lag between the Japanese and English translation editions.

—SIMON B

Manga, Explained

Sure, you know Madrox from MODOK, but manga can be bewildering to the unsuspecting reader. To help, CF breaks down the types and terms.

BRIGID ALVERSON



SHOUJO

Written for girls 18 and under

Translation: Shoujo stories usually feature a heroine who must overcome a problem while staying true to her own moral code. Expect plenty of plot twists interspersed with multi-page sequences of the main character reflecting on her situation.

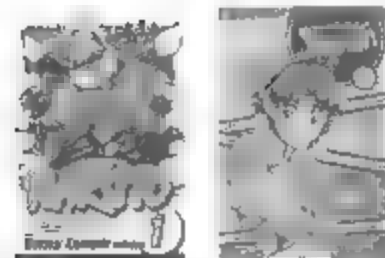
Recommended: *Fruits Basket* (Tokyopop); *Oyayubihime Infinity* (CMX)

SHONEN

Aimed at boys 18 and under

Translation: These books usually revolve around a hero with a special talent who must prove himself through a series of tests. Action sequences are key elements, which can range from big fight scenes to bread-baking.

Recommended: *Naruto* and *Yakitate!! Japan* (Viz Media)

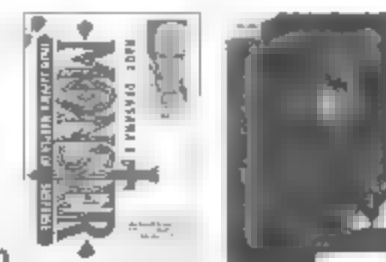


JOSEI

Written for young women

Translation: Josei is manga's answer to chick lit. Light romance, coming-of-age stories and great clothes, written for women in their 20s.

Recommended: *Nana* (Viz); *Nodame Cantabile* (Del Rey)



SEINEN

Aimed at young men

Translation: These stories deal with the two usual preoccupations of men in their 20s: sex and violence. Most ecchi manga fall into this category, as do battle manga, thrillers and even romances.

Recommended: *Naoki Urasawa's Monster* (Viz); *Basilisk* (Del Rey)



ECCHI

Sexy and soft-core stories

Translation: Nothing but a big tease. Expect lots of sexual situations but no actual porn. Many are harem comedies, while others simply toss guys and girls together in compromising situations. You'll see lots of fan service — boobs and panties — but not the real deal.

Recommended: *Negima* (Del Rey); *Chobits* (Tokyopop)



YAOI

Love stories between two men, written by women, for women

Translation: This isn't gay literature, not that there's anything wrong with that. These stories are more like Harlequin romances, with a pursuer (the seme) and prey (the uke). The men are willowy and beautiful, often with long, flowing hair.

Recommended: *Challengers* (DramaQueen); *Bonds of Love* (Be Beautiful)

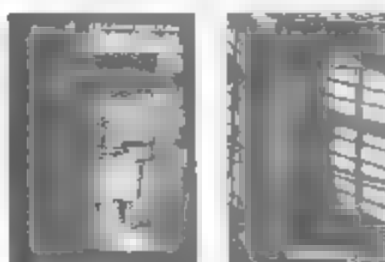


YURI

Love stories between women, written for women

Translation: Unlike yaoi, yuri is not written for the delectation of the opposite sex but is more an exploration of love and relationships, often with a lesbian outlook. So far, only a handful of titles have been translated into English, though Seven Seas has plans to bring out more.

Recommended: *Blue* (Fanfare/Ponent Mon); *Rica'tte Kanji* (ALC)

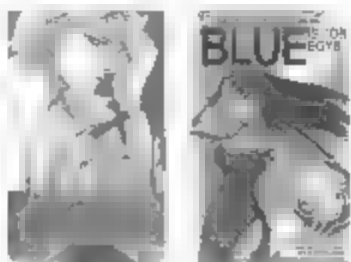


GEKIGA

A mature, serious style of manga

Translation: Literally, "dramatic pictures," gekiga originated as an alternative to the childish manga of the 1950s. In the next two decades, it became Japan's version of underground comics. As readers matured, so did their manga, and gekiga became the mainstream; today the term refers to manga with a dark outlook on life.

Recommended: *The Push Man* (Drawn & Quarterly); *Doing Time* (Fanfare/Ponent Mon)



DOUJINSHI

Fan-drawn comics that are either completely original or use characters from existing series

Translation: While it has a reputation for porn, doujinshi comes in all flavors. Japanese doujinshi are not available in the U.S., but you can find British and American doujinshi online and at cons.

Recommended: *Gut* (Lime Manga); *Blue is for Boys* and *Pink is for Girls* (Sweatdrop)

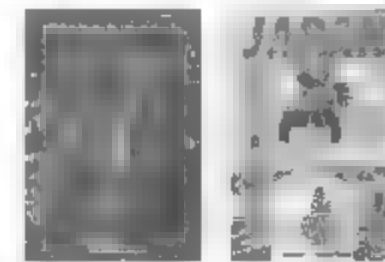


HENTAI

Porn manga, also known as ero-manga

Translation: This is a robust genre with many specialized sub-genres for different tastes. The one thing they all have in common: enormous boobs.

Recommended: *Patchwork* and *Relish* (Icarus)



NOUVELLE MANGA

Literary comics of artistic distinction that focus on ordinary life

Translation: Nouvelle manga is an actual movement, born between French and Japanese inspirations, with a manifesto and everything. But don't be scared. The comics are pretty good.

Recommended: *The Walking Man* and *Japan as Viewed by 17 Creators* (Fanfare/Ponent Mon)

Life is too Short

ADRIAN TOMINE's new collection, *Shortcomings*, hits stands in October

On *Optic Nerve*:

Every issue is like a step in my learning process, and I like to think that's reflected in the art and story-telling to some degree. Whenever I get copies of a new issue of my comic, I pretty much instantly start making mental and sometimes real notes about what I want to try to improve. In the past I've relied pretty heavily on narration and captions, and with *Shortcomings*, I was trying to tell a cohesive story without those devices. And by just eliminating that one element, I was suddenly forced to work much harder with the remaining tools like dialogue, facial expressions and background detail.

On writing it as a three-part story:

I wanted to try writing a longer story, and the idea of producing three installments of 32 pages was more appealing to me than doing the whole book straight through. I'm glad that bookstores are now welcoming graphic novels onto their shelves, but I'm still a fan of regular comic books, and I like the idea that comic stores still have things to offer that big bookstores don't.

I think it's always a positive thing when an artist tries something different. I'll leave the critical evaluation of the book to others, but I know that personally, I learned a lot from the experience and I'm proud to have at least one graphic novel under my belt.

On editing *Abandon the Old in Tokyo*:

A lot of the editing process involves not only the literal translation of the words, but also the translation of the visuals. In other words, I end up thinking a lot about how dialogue balloons should be placed, whether or not a panel needs to be reversed, if the movement from panel to panel works in the Western format, etc. I'm sure that engaging with the mechanics of cartooning on that level is useful to me when I sit down to draw my own stories, even if it's only on a subconscious level.



On his commercial work:

I don't really have any way of knowing if someone who sees one of my illustrations will then seek out my comics. My books sell all right, but I doubt that has much to do with Perry Ellis. If anything, I think the comics are their own draw, and the ancillary work generates from that. And for the record, I only did some conceptual work for that Perry Ellis campaign and then quit. They hired other people after that to basically trace my thumbnails on the computer or something.

On cover design:

I knew from the start that I wanted all three issues to look connected, and I also wanted to make them look pretty different from other stuff on the rack at the comic store. Comics have now gotten so slick and garish and busy that it's hard to compete for attention.

On the mainstream:

I actually think "alternative" comics are getting much more mainstream attention these days than superhero comics. Or at least, a different kind of attention. You know, a lot of newspapers reported on the death of Captain America, but it was almost in the same way that they'd report on the re-emergence of the pet rock or something. Meanwhile, books like *Jimmy Corrigan* and *Persepolis* are being reviewed and discussed in a much more respectful and thoughtful way.

On self-assessment:

I think there's certain skills that a cartoonist can improve on simply by setting their mind to it — things like drawing perspective, or learning how to use a brush. But the harder stuff, the real magic of comics, is kind of impossible to pin down, and therefore harder to work on.

AS TOLD TO TIM LEONE



CELEBRITY SPOTLIGHT

AVRIL LAVIGNE

on her manga, *Avril Lavigne's Make 5 Wishes*

Do you have favorite manga books?

No, not really. I don't read comic books.



Why did you decide to do a manga series?

The opportunity came a.o.g. My manager was telling me about it and asked me if I wanted to do one. I said, "OK, sure." I thought it was just another thing for me to do, something fun. Other people wrote the story and did the illustration [through Dei Rey]. I just approved everything and went along. I know kids really like manga these days.

So there isn't much participation at this point?

I picked what story. I had 10 different skits presented to me and picked it and then went through it with the writer. The next one I'm doing, actually, I've kind of given an idea, more like said, "Do this." And they're writing it and making it into a story.

How does being involved in creating manga compare to creating music?

Oh, I mean, it's just a small little thing on the side, just for the kids.

JUSTIN MONROE

Sex Scene or Comic Cover?

Some cover images are sexually suggestive, but these take the beefcake. See if you can spot the difference between the comic covers and **comic coitus**.



Sex scenes: F, K, O, R

HITLER HILARITY

Norwegian cartoonist **Jason** brings the funny in *I Killed Adolf Hitler*, his new book about a time-traveling hit man hunting Hitler.

How did *I Killed Adolf Hitler* (Fantagraphics) come about?

I no longer remember exactly where the idea came from. I just wanted to do a time machine story. I think one involving Hitler. It's such an old idea, to bring back Hitler as a clone, as a brain in a box or in a time machine. It's a cliché, so hopefully you can use that and have some fun.

Was it more difficult drawing Hitler as

an anthropomorphic character, rather your fictional characters?

No, that's actually why I chose Hitler. I could draw him in my animal style, and with the mustache and hairstyle, everybody would see who it's supposed to be.

Hitler makes only brief appearances in the book — so, why choose Hitler?

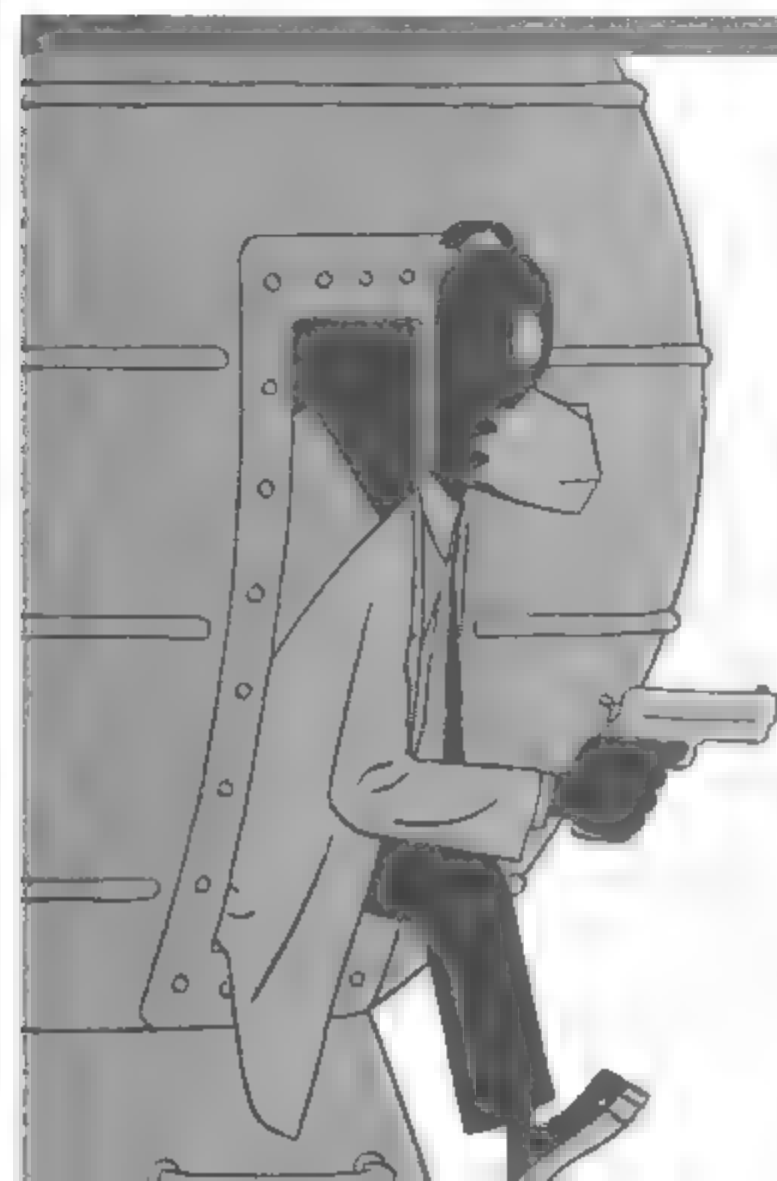
He would work visually as an animal character. But I didn't really know

what to do with him Brought back to the present, how would he act? What would he say? I solved this by giving him no dialogue and having him disappear halfway into the story. The story wasn't about him anyway I wanted to keep the focus on the two main characters: the time-traveling hit man and his ex-girlfriend. I thought it would be more interesting and funnier if they spent the

second half of the book looking for Hitler but not finding him.

Do your books resonate differently with international audiences?

No, I haven't found there to be any big differences. I don't have any particular expectations about this book. Of course, Hitler is a problematic character to use, especially in a comedy. But Mel Brooks did so too, in *To Be or Not to Be*. —ALAN HUGHES



Reading the Fine Print

Critic Douglas Wolk's new book, **Reading Comics**, explains what comics mean which ones to read.

Who is Reading Comics for?

My ideal reader might've been reading comics for years or recently drifted in via *Persepolis* or *Black Hole* or *V for Vendetta*. It doesn't matter; what matters is that she's curious to read thoughts about the medium, from the perspective of somebody who's got particular tastes and strong opinions. *Reading Comics* (Perseus Books) is meant for people who are interested in arguments about art and sensory experience — 'arguments' both in the sense of making a case for a specific perspective, and in the sense of debate.

Hardest part about writing the book?

Probably trying to make sure that what



I was writing was clear — not excessively inside-baseball comics stuff, not logically gnarled, not dragged down by bad academic jargon. It didn't help that I'd made myself reread Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*, the worst-written work of brilliant thinking ever. Kant's ideas about art and the way people experience it are incredibly insightful, but his actual writing is so dense you practically have to take an ice pick to it.

Why should people read *Reading Comics*?

If you've read a lot of comics, you might come away with a new perspective on work you already know well. If you haven't read a lot of the same comics I have, you might discover a cartoonist you'd really like. In either case, you might think I'm totally off the mark and get fired up to write something arguing against what I wrote. Those debates are always fun, too.

—TIM LEONG

BOOK 'EM

Four other books about comics to tame your tome temptations.

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art, Scott McCloud (Harper Collins)

This was the first to deconstruct how comics work through symbols, vocabulary, color and more. Presented in comic format, McCloud's concepts are easy to digest, though you'll be hungry for more.

Comics and Sequential Art, Will Eisner (Poorhouse Press)

Eisner's book takes you through the creative process of visual storytelling from a creator's perspective. And though Eisner's from an older era, his ideas still hold up in today's crazy, crossover world.

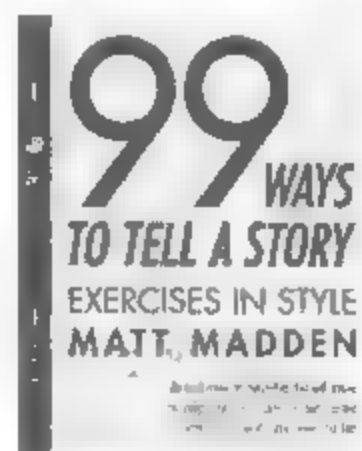
99 Ways to Tell a Story: Exercises in Style, Matt Madden (Chamberlain Bros.)

Madden retells the same one-page comic — you guessed it — 99 different ways. Sound repetitive? Hardly. Madden explores the boundaries of storytelling by referencing styles and concepts from some of the best in the business.

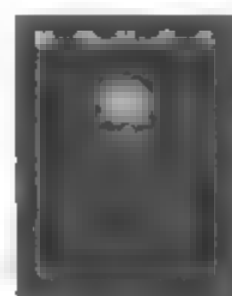
Manga: The Complete Guide, Jason Thompson (Del Rey)

This new book lives up to the title. It includes more than 900 titles, with background, commentary and ratings. This book could do for manga what *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* did in '83.

—LESLEY NICHOLS



COMICS YOU PROBABLY DON'T KNOW OF, BUT SHOULD



HOW
Josh Simmons
(Fanta-graphics)
Available Now



The
Bottomless
Belly Button
Dash Shaw
Available 2007



Maintenance
Jim Massey,
Robbi
Rodriguez
(Oni Press)
Available Now



1-800-MICE
Matthew
Thurber
(PictureBox, Inc.)
Available Now



A REAL LADIES' MAN
Casanova writer Matt Fraction on how to have sex. Sorta. **page 23**



SUPERHERO PICKUP LINES
See how they fare against our expert panel. **page 19**



COMIC ROCK STARS
We rate artists who rock as musicians **page 22**

LIFE+STYLE

CULTURE + LIFE + PLAY

The Writing (and Art) on the Wall

Easy ways to spruce up your space with comics

By Laura Hudson



Comic décor — from She-Hulk posters to *Wizard* pinups — has long been dismissed as juvenile. But comics are far more than kid stuff, and growing up doesn't mean growing out of them. With a little creativity, your home can pay homage to comics and look good doing it.

THE INTERNET IS FOR RASTERBATION

With the help of an online tool called the Rasterbator, you can turn any comic book image into a wall-sized mural without ever touching Adobe PhotoShop. Convert your favorite picture into an enormous, tiled image, and then print it out page-by-page. You can play with your JPGs in the privacy of your home — without deleting your web history afterward.

Step 1: Download the Rasterbator at homokaasu.org/rasterbator/. (Mac users will need to upload their images to an applet at the site.)

Step 2: After the file loads, use the Rasterbator to crop the picture as desired, and choose the dot size and dimensions for your final image.

Step 3: Open and print the PDF generated by the Rasterbator.

Step 4: Assemble the pages and mount them on the wall.



OTHER WAYS TO DECK YOUR HALL OF JUSTICE

CUT AND TRACE

Paint your walls with custom comic book borders and patterns — no artistic talent required. Make a photocopy of any simple logo or design and tape it, face up, to an acetate stencil board. Cut out the design, remove the photocopy, and tape the stencil where you want to paint your image. Remember to measure out borders according to the length of your stencil so that the pattern begins and ends evenly.

PROJECT YOUR PROJECT

Think big. Create a wall mural out of your favorite comic book panel or page. Choose an image that converts well to black and white, and create a transparency at any copy shop. Project the image onto your wall with a projector, and then trace the image in pencil. Turn off the projector and paint.

FABRICATE

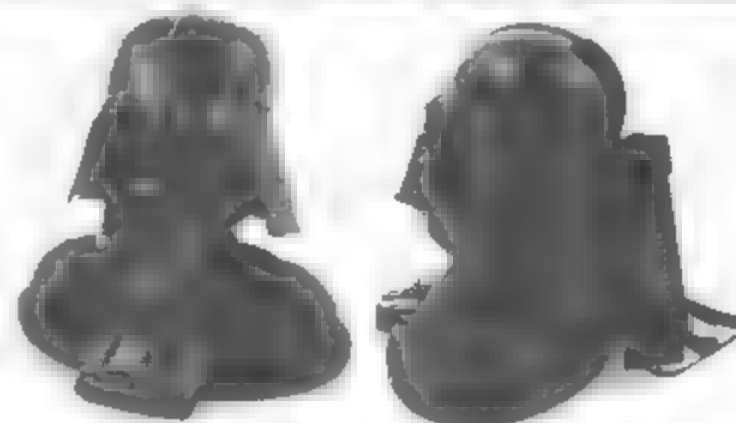
Ever wanted to make your very own *Mouse Guard* throw pillows? Now you can. The easiest method is using iron-on paper, but you can also transfer images to fabric from any black-and-white photocopy or laser-printed page. Place the picture face down on the fabric and paint over the image with turpentine. Rub the image firmly with a spoon until it transfers completely.

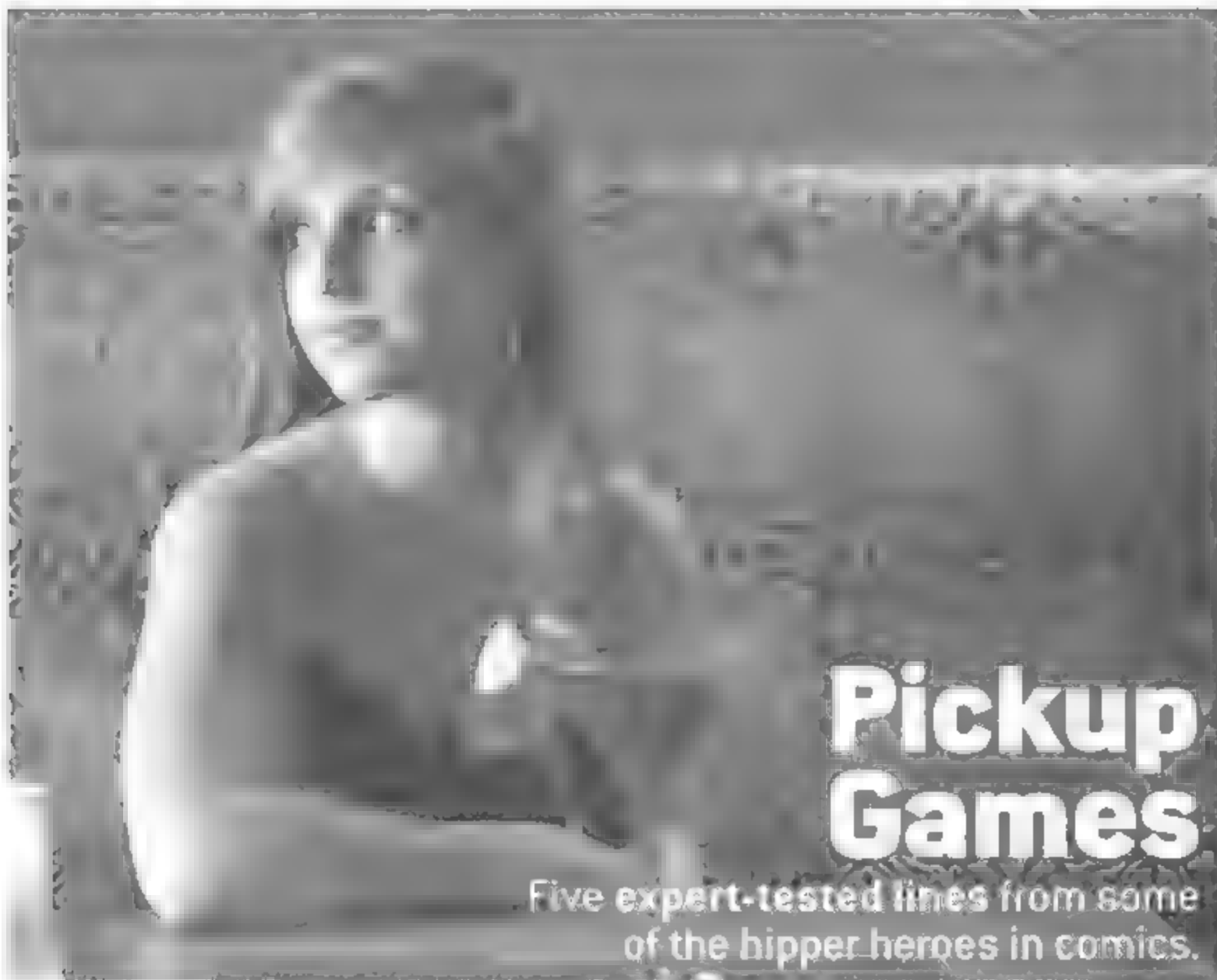
GO AHEAD,
GEEK OUT

HELMET RANG

Forget those holographic messages, old school handsets are back. When you have a call, the Imperial March rings as Vader's helmet turns. There are also three sound effect buttons on the base that play the march, a swinging lightsaber sound and Darth's heavy breathing. Graciously not included, however, is his cringe-inducing, "Noooooo!" from *Episode III*. Available now, boysstuff.co.uk, \$35.93

—ALAN HUGHES





Pickup Games

Five expert-tested lines from some of the hipper heroes in comics.

Ranking System:

1. Someone call security
2. Courtesy smile
3. You can buy me a drink
4. Wanna make out?
5. Let's make babies

GUY GARDNER
"You might as well sleep with me because I'm going to tell everybody we did it anyway."

TONY STARK
"I love the color of your dress. I've got a few Lamborghinis in the same color."

DOC MAGNUS
"You look just like the robot I'm building in my basement!"

MATT MURDOCK
"If I had a nickel every time I saw a girl as pretty as you, I'd be broke. Because I'm blind."

JIMMY OLSEN
"Excuse me, can I flirt with you?"



Heather
27 editor,
San Francisco

Don't forget to mention the nasty case of chlamydia you caught from me 1

Meh. Lamborghinis don't have back seats. Also, my dress is ugly 2

I like a man who's good with tools. As long as he's taller than Warren from *Buffy* 4

Finally, somebody who won't judge me for my feeding tube 5

I can spot the needy ones a mile away. I'd give some under-the-sweater action and a wrong number 3



Tina
27 photographer,
New York

Keep one eye open — I might kill you in your sleep. Mother eff 2

Does one come in safety orange? If not, go home and ask your mama to tuck you in 3

Let's get married. Please tell me you're single. I might be in love with you 5

Kill yourself. 1

Yes. 5



Nia
26, fashion designer,
Chicago

Great. Could you also let them know how disgusted I was by it? 1

Clearly, you've mistaken me for a gold digger. 2

You look just like the nerd I told to eff off 1

Are you serious? 1

Sure! As long as you don't mind me ignoring you 3



Jayna
25, writer,
St. Louis

No thanks, jerk-face. But when he does tell about our nonexistent tryst, I'll just tell everyone about his ED 1

Foreign sports cars are lame. If he gets a Ford F-150, then we can talk about the drink he can buy me 3

Nerds are sexy. So long as his jeans aren't up to his nipples, I'd think it's pretty hot. 5

Well, at least he's got a sense of humor... 4

Uh, no. If you have to ask, that's a no. 3

COMIC COCKTAILS

Nothing like a stiff drink for that stiff Fall breeze. Time to get familiar with the best comic-inspired drinks.

HULK SMASHED!

Forty years after Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created the **Incredible Hulk**, it spawned an unlikely tribute: a cocktail. The drink — made from cognac and Hypnotiq — is named for its vivid green hue. Lacking any mixer, this drink hits you at full strength, leaving you a bit like its namesake — lacking self-control and causing mass destruction. Smashing!

- 2 oz. Hypnotiq
- 2 oz. Hennessy (or preferred cognac) ♦
- ♦ Stir together and serve over ice



WEAPON X

It's almost oxymoronic to name this sweet mixture after someone as savage as Wolverine. The similarities stop at induced memory loss, though.

2 1/2 oz. coffee-flavored brandy
1 oz. caramel liqueur
1 oz. Bacardí Coco rum
3 oz. milk
6 scoops of vanilla ice cream
1 oz. caramel syrup
Blend everything in a bar blender, and serve in a hurricane glass.

SPIDER-MAN

Use the leftover Hypnotiq from your Incredible Hulk, if there is any, to complete this Marvel reunion. You'll be exchanging in witty banter, Brian Bendis-style, before you can say "Excelsior!"
1/2 oz. citrus rum
1/2 oz. Hypnotiq
1/2 oz. grenadine (pomegranate syrup)
Layer Hypnotiq, then grenadine, then rum. Serve in a shot glass.

—SAIDAH PETRIE

Voice Recognition

Yuri Lowenthal, the man behind Superman on *Legion of Super-Heroes* and *Naruto*'s Sasuke

How he got Superman:

Obviously I was thrilled when the audition came across, how could I not be? But I audition for things every day and more often than not, never hear about it again. When I got the callback for this one, I was over the moon. And nervous as hell. I was originally called back for Superman, Brainiac 5 and Lightning Lad, and, honestly, any of those would have been fine with me. I mean, where does a Jewish kid from Nashville get off thinking he could be the Man of Steel? My dreams were more towards the Earthly powered, vengeance-fueled guys like Batman, although I once — at age 6 — combined the Captain America costume my mom had made me and the cowl and cape of a Batman costume she had made me and briefly fought crime as "Captain Bat." Anyway, I went in, and tried to remain calm, but it wasn't easy. And the nerdgasm I had after reciting the Legion oath — part of my Superman audition — didn't help. After reading for Superman, they had me read for Brainiac, and then they said, "OK, thank you, we're done." An actor always hates hearing that, especially when they hadn't even asked me to go on to Lightning Lad. I was too bummed to remind them.

A couple of weeks later I got a call from my agent saying that WB was going to let us know, but that we'd all done great and even if we weren't cast as a regular on the show, they'd get us in for guest stars and such. I tried to let myself down easy over the weekend, but I was still buzzing hard when my agent called and toyed with me for a few seconds before letting me know that they wanted me for Superman. I believe the first thing I said to her was, "If I start crying right now, will you drop me as a client?" and then started screaming like a very un-Superman-like little girl.

On fame:

I've never been recognized on the street for any of my voice work, but when I go to conventions, after the first day or so, people start to recognize me a little. My anonymity sometimes works in my favor, though. I once did an on-camera job



for a comic book company, and when they found out, by accident, that I was voicing an "iconic" character belonging to a rival company, I was fired and replaced. People are silly sometimes.

Finding a character's voice:

It depends on the character and



IF I START CRYING RIGHT NOW, WILL YOU DROP ME AS A CLIENT?

sometimes how much information on that character is available at the start. With Superman, I already had a lifetime of background info on the guy. That, and, basically, am him. With Sasuke it took a little more time because he's unlike most of the characters I had played up until that point. I had to call on a much darker — but no less fun — part of myself to find him.

On source material:

I was familiar with neither show's source material when I began. But you'd better believe I got caught up quick on *Legion* and *Naruto*.

The toughest character to voice:

Different characters are hard for different reasons, but often you get cast in a role because of how close you are to that character, so I guess the characters I really have to stretch for are the toughest. I'd say the character of Kuma in Spike TV's *Afro Samurai*, and I have to thank those guys for trusting me to find him, because I wouldn't normally get cast in a role like that.

AS TOLD TO ERNIE HIL



Black Hole Casting Call

Envisioning 'the bug' on the big screen

Comic book movies are hot properties these days, and what better to hit the big screen next than the edgy *Black Hole* — especially with Neil Gaiman and Roger Avary attached to write the screenplay. *Black Hole* is creator Charles Burns' R-rated romp that follows several '70s teens through their first sexual experiences. Think *American Pie*, but with STDs that turn you into mutants.



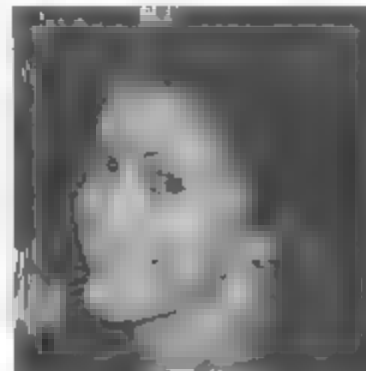
Britney Spears
as Chris Rhodes



James Franco
as Rob Facincanni



Benjamin McKenzie
as Keith Pearson



Shannon Elizabeth
as Eliza



The confused, pliable Spears is a perfect choice for Rhodes, a popular girl who contracts an STD from a graveyard tryst and falls from grace. Her life ruined by obsessive attentions, bad decisions and a broken heart, Rhodes morphs from wholesome girl next door to a worn-out, alcoholic shell of her former self. Much like the busted pop princess, Rhodes knows how to hit bottom with a bang, albeit with her hair intact.



After starring as a good-looking, sympathetic jerk in *Freaks and Geeks*, and a good-looking, sympathetic jerk in *Spider-Man*, Franco is a natural for Facincanni, a goateed charmer who infects the hottest chick in school with his STD. Whether he's talking out his ass or the creepy little mouth embedded in his neck, Rob is K-Fed to Chris' Britney, skeezy facial hair and all.



With his floppy hair and sad doggy eyes, former O.C. star McKenzie is a mere unibrow away from Pearson, a well-meaning stoner looking for love in all the wrong places. Mostly, in the pants of deeply troubled girls. The former Ryan Atwood should feel right at home.



Best known as the *American Pie* temptress, Elizabeth is the spitting image of this *Black Hole* beauty — a free-spirited artist with a puppy dog tail. If you've been salivating for more sex scenes from Elizabeth, it's easy to imagine her as the exhibitionist Eliza, who walks around the house sans underwear and seduces unsuspecting male virgins. Might want to wrap it up, though — this one's got "the bug." —LAURA HUDSON



MARK VERHEIDEN ON MY NAME IS BRUCE

The co-executive producer of *Battlestar Galactica* on his new **Bruce Campbell** movie

On the story behind *My Name Is Bruce*:

I was friends with Dark Horse Entertainment head Mike Richardson and I remember pestering him over and over to check out *Evil Dead 2*. He finally did, and he was as blown away

Flash forward a few years and I'm working on *Battlestar Galactica*, and Mike's made a deal to make a bunch of lower budget indie movies. I've been collecting comic books since I was a kid, and had recently become enthralled with a DC Comic from the late '40s, early '50s, *The Adventures of Alan Ladd*. For the youngsters in the crowd, Ladd was a huge movie star in those bygone times, and the comic was intriguing because (at least for the first few issues) it was about Alan Ladd. The actor. Getting kidnapped and abused by bad guys who sneered at "the big movie star" Something in the premise just screamed Bruce Campbell, so I pitched a premise to Mike — what if Bruce the actor were kidnapped and forced to fight a monster? Mike got it, took it to Bruce, Bruce was into it, and there you go

On working with Bruce Campbell:

In a 20-year career, I've worked with all sorts. Bruce was a dream. Unlike his sneering alter ego in the movie, he's funny, he's collaborative, and he makes great tomato soup. He's also a darn good director

On what he's learned:

I've been writing comics, television and movies for years, so I suppose they all dovetail into one melting pot of crisscrossing influences. However, I found that Jack Daniel's single-barrel bourbon was probably the biggest help during the writing of *MNIB*

On plans for a sequel:

More than plans. The people who put up the green were thrilled by the rough cut of Bruce and immediately offered to finance a *Bruce Dos*. We are a little busy. Bruce is doing a series called *Burn Notice*, and besides the last season of *Battlestar*, I'm writing a live action *Teen Titans* movie and another called *ARK*. But that said, we will absolutely find a way to get more Bruce goodness on screen

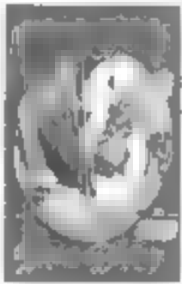
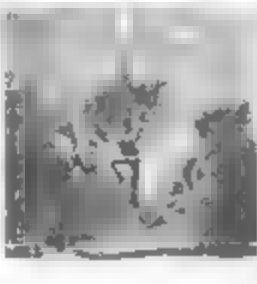
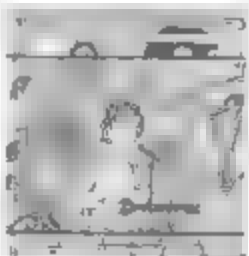
AS TOLD TO TIM LEONG



Art Rock

Not everyone can create comics. Not everyone can **make music**. Fewer still can do both, but the following artists can.

—ANDREW AVERY

Artist:	"Angry" Jim Campbell	Dame Darcy	David Heatley	James Kochalka	Bryan Lee O'Malley	Lauren Weinstein
						
Comic:	<i>Krachmacher</i> 	<i>Meatcake</i> 	<i>Deadpan</i> 	<i>Super F*ckers</i> 	<i>Scott Pilgrim</i> 	<i>Girl Stories</i> 
Band:	Paper Fleet	Death by Doll	David Heatley	James Kochalka Superstar	Kupek	Flaming Fire
Sounds like:	Sloppy Midwestern jangle-punk relocated (with odes) to Brooklyn.	The most goth-y, gothic goth you can imagine. With lyrics about devils and frozen gardens, but no mention of television dating shows.	Live! From David Heatley's bedroom. Lo-fi gems like "I Hated Your Movie" and "Men Go Extinct" showcase Heatley's humor.	The best band you've ever heard, assuming you're 8 years old. His song "Hockey Monkey" was the theme for the short-lived TV show <i>The Loop</i> .	Almost exactly how you'd imagine a Scott Pilgrim band would sound: poppy, cute lyrics, a dash of immaturity.	A cult of go-go dancers and side-show freaks. Pretty sure that was intentional.

GLAD RAP

Forget the blues. When **Brian K. Vaughan** is down he turns up hip hop.

After a punishing review, Vaughan resists the urge to fight back. "Rappers are the only artists who look cool attacking their critics," Vaughan says, "so it's my go-to music whenever I'm recovering in private from the misery of a horrible review. You're just supposed to ride it out, but I love the vitriol and the passion. It's something I'd never do, but living vicariously through them, it's a thrill."



Dirt Off Your Shoulder by Jay-Z (*The Black Album*)

Vaughan's Vibe: "There's an old saying writers use to brush off bad reviews: 'The dogs bark, but the caravan rolls on.' Jay-Z updates that brilliantly with, 'I'm a hustler homey, you a customer crony.' 'Customer' is probably the cruelest word ever used to describe a fan who doesn't like an artist's work."



Forgot About Dre by Dr. Dre, with Eminem (2001)

Vaughan's Vibe: "Y'all are the reason that Dre ain't been getting no sleep, so fuck y'all, all of y'all, if you don't like me, blow me' As my people say: 'Nuff said'."

Double Trouble

Kieron Gillen (*Phonogram*) and **Matt Fraction** (*Punisher War Journal*) know more than just writing comics prose, they're pros at other things too.



HOW TO HAVE COOL TASTE IN MUSIC

A lesson in **faking it** until you make it.
By Kieron Gillen

It used to be a lot easier when all around here was obscure Sub Pop 7-inch-imports. You wanted people to think you had cool taste in music so when asked what you were "into" you nonchalantly replied, "Northern Soul." You didn't need to own any Northern Soul records. You didn't need to know what Northern Soul was. You didn't even need to know where North was. It was a magic password that would have people nodding sagely and/or wanting to sleep with you within moments. Nowadays, it's a bit trickier, but there are two main approaches.

Read all the music press

From the glossy monthlies to self-published fanzines with a readership of two (the creator and their mum) — read them. Observe the movements in the music blogosphere and all the web press. Hang around on web forums like I Love Music (ilxm.com), follow the conversation and speedily investigate anything referenced. Sell anything — furniture, organs, your very soul — to get the exclusive white label everyone's talking about. Spend every living second of your life looking for the new

Make shit up

No matter how educated your music tastes are, if you're talking to a musical mouth-breather, they're going to judge you uncool on their own stunted horizons. If they've never heard of it, they can't do that. All they know is you dig something they've never heard of. Groundless elitism. This is the absolute crux of having a cool taste in music. It's also useful, if anyone claims to have heard of the band, you know you're dealing with a similar posturing ninny as yourself and can plan accordingly.



Matt Fraction
Half writer, half lover
all beard

HOW TO MAKE LOVE TO KIERON GILLEN

A guide to **bedding** the *Phonogram* writer in six sexy steps. By Matt Fraction

Not long ago, my colleague Kieron Gillen wrote the hit comic *Phonogram*, and, as such, I'm sure he is now being overwhelmed by offers of physical love from men and women alike. So allow me to humbly offer these few lovemaking tips

1. Kiss with your mouth open.

Kieron likes the physical intimacy an open-mouthed kiss suggests. His tongue, sharp and darting like a lizard's, might at first disconcert, but stay with it!

2. Nipples, nipples, nipples.

Nipples on men, once thought to be akin to buttons on a sofa, have been known to drive Kieron WILD! Especially if he's been "loosened up" with a "few" drinks

3. Work the shaft.

I'm only gonna say it three more times: Work the shaft, work the shaft, work the shaft

4. Talk dirty to me.

By "me," I mean "author of *Phonogram*, comics writer Kieron Gillen."

5. Don't put your junk in these holes

It's like the old joke about the traveling salesman, the farmer, the farmer's hot daughter, the barn with the three holes, the dick, the dick in the holes, and the turbo milking machine awaiting on the other side that de-dicks the traveling salesman. Do you know that joke? When presented with the holes of Kieron Gillen, DO NOT put your dick in them

6. Working through the tears

Post-orgasm, Gillen is known to be weepy and needing to be held. Hold him. Let him weep. Those are the tears of a genius, and you are blessed to lick them as they spill from his cheeks to yours. All the intimacy heaven allows shall be your reward.

HOW TO MAKE UP A BAND NAME

1. BAND NAME

Epidural
Swiss
Banjo's
Vermillion
Kom.tet
Lemsip

Brass
Nightmare
Colonic
Daffodil
Berserk
Disco

Revelers
Possee-e-e
Renegades
Brigade
Order
Movement

2. GENRES

Bedsit
Punk
Chainsaw
Abattoir
Post
Aboriginal

Two-step
Reggae
Punk
Krautrock
Jungle
Psychedelia

3. BAD-METAPHOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE.

Cocaine
Meth
Acid
Tasty
booze
Poppers
Ketamine
Shrooms
Battery
acid
Essence of
lavender

Take a word from each column in Table 1 to get what band you're "into." Choose a word from each column of Table 2 and hyphenate to get what music the band plays. And, if you're a budding music journalist, add a word from Table 3 to denote what the musicians are "on," adding between three and forty-two exclamation marks depending on how much space your review has to fill. Soon, you'll be able to pontificate about your love of the Epidural Colonic Brigade's unique brand of chainsaw-reggae .. on ACID!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Where the Magic Happens

Inside the office of **Brian Wood**, the man behind the wartime *DMZ* and the upcoming Viking book, *Northlanders*.

PHOTOS BY TIM LEONG



1 DVDs

Sometimes I watch DVDs while I write. I have it running in a tiny window on my screen. It's usually TV shows. Like, I watch *Rome* that way because I never watch things when they're actually on. I actually just got the *I, Claudius* set. Or I'll watch something that might get me in the mood. Like even though it's a shitty good movie, *Black Hawk Down*, or *Children of Men* for the urban warfare scenes, if I'm really struggling with something or think it might help.

2 TREO

I tend to use it more for traveling. When I got it, it was attached to it. It was sick. Just texting constantly. I was like, "It's so easy to text now!"

3 DEMO ART

It's a DEMO panel from Matthew Woodson I bought. He was going to draw *Dogs Day End* (Top Shelf Comics). I talked with him after the first 12 pages and said, "Everyone loves your work, but for your own mental health, you need to think about if you can do this." He just did 12 pages, and it nearly killed him. A couple days later he quit. It was for the best because if you're not 110 percent into it, you're going to be miserable, because it's such a labor of love.

● SUPERMARKET ART

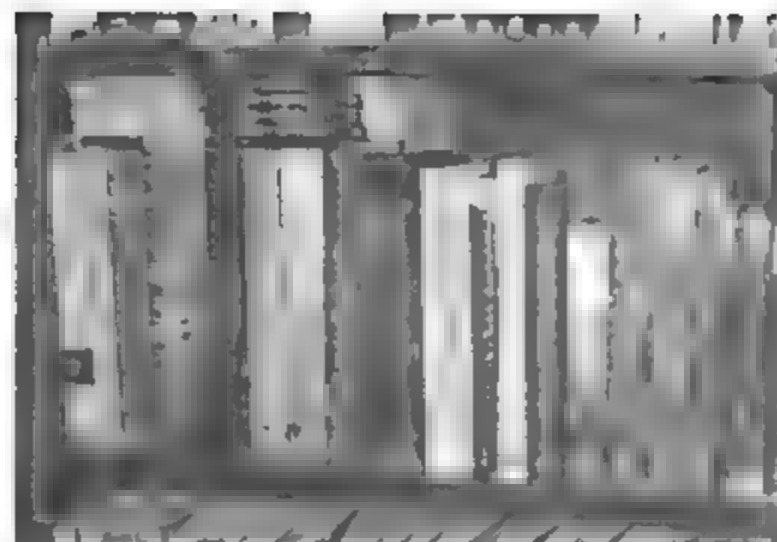
It's stuff I bought or was given to me. It's mostly stuff from books I've done. I bought seven or eight pages from *Supermarket*, and I've got about just as much from *DEMO*.

● COMPUTER

This is where I do all my writing, and drawing when I draw, which is less frequently.

● AGE OF EMPIRES III

That's my true procrastination activity. *Age of Empires*. I have a PlayStation 3, but I so rarely play any games. I never liked Xbox and was really obsessed with getting a PS3 and tried for months and finally got one. And of course there's hardly any games out for it yet, so it just sits there.



● VIKING BOOKS

This shelf is mostly nonfiction. A lot of it for *Northlanders* (Vertigo). I kind of go overboard with the reference. I did it with *DMZ* too. A lot of nonfiction, firsthand accounts of war. It was originally like a Joe Sacco-style first-person documentary. But then it evolved away from that once it became a Vertigo book.



● WILCO'S PICTURE

I bought it, intending I'd have to photograph it for my artist, but he's even more of a reference hound than I am because he suddenly just had everything he needed. I bought all these coffee-table and photo books, but he's like, "Eh, I've got it all." I can be a real stickler about a lot of things, especially locations, and there's a definite language barrier with these Italian guys. With *DMZ* (Vertigo) it's just a lot easier to send a picture because some of the description might not translate.

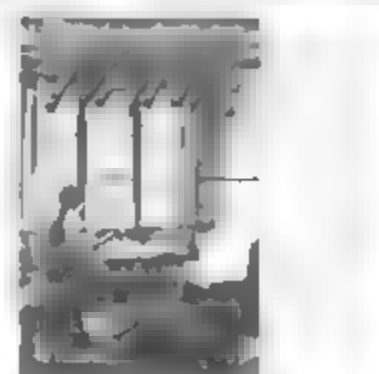
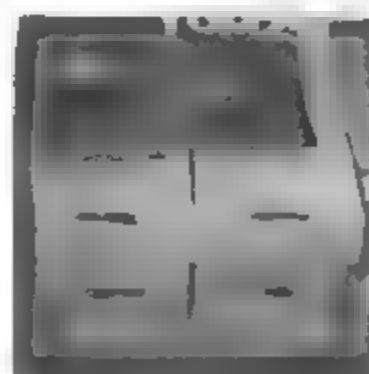


● ENID DOLL

I got it when *Ghost World* (Fantagraphics) came out, at a comic store. She can actually wear the mask. I don't own a lot of toys, but I thought that was pretty cool.

● SWEDISH MUSIC

Right now I have Wilco on repeat. But Becky Cloonan gave me a bunch of Swedish Viking metal, which is an actual genre of music. It's like Scandinavian operatic metal. Becky's obsessed with it.



● SHORT BOXES

It's a box of *Supermarket* singles. I keep a bunch of my current singles here but we're running out of room. I have these here because I sometimes need to reference back issues.

● NANA

Nana (Viz Media) is my favorite manga. I bought it because it was one of the best-selling ones on Earth, and anything that sells like that I want to read to see why it has such mass appeal, and figure out how to steal from it.

● PUNISHER MAX

I buy very few books. I buy manga and I buy *Punisher MAX*, which is the only Marvel book I buy.

Kubert vs. Kubert

DC pencillers Andy and Adam Kubert go head-to-head in this family face-off.



ADAM KUBERT vs. **ANDY KUBERT**



As instructors, what's the No. 1 idea you try to teach at The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon & Graphic Art?

Adam: The thing I stress the most in class is to be happy at whatever it is you choose to do. If it's comics, great. Storyboarding, great. Pumping gas at Hess, great. It doesn't matter what you choose to do for a living, just be sure it's something you enjoy.

Andy: The No. 1 idea that I try to get across in class is that anybody can draw. You just have to work hard enough to get good at it. If I can do it, didn't start drawing until I was 19-20 years old — then anyone can.

Who's a better artist, Adam or Andy?

Papa Joe.

Andy: Adam has his strong points, and I have mine. There are times I'll look at his work and be totally amazed by what he came up with. That's probably a better question to ask my dad, though.

Writer you'd love to work with but have yet to?

Adam: The one that I think writes most closely to the way I like to tell a story is Joss Whedon. What he's doing with John Cassaday on *Astonishing X-Men* is inspiring.

Andy: Frank Miller, Alan Moore, Joss Whedon, Paul Dini, if you're talking comics writers.

Your hidden talent that's not related to comics?

I make a mean omelet.

Andy: I can touch the end of my nose with my tongue — and wiggle my ears.

Your biggest vice?

Adam: It was in my old house mounted to my worktable. It was huge, around 6 by 12 inches. You could hold a 2-by-10 in it with ease. It was the envy of the neighborhood. God, how I miss that vice.

Andy: I'm not sure if I have any, but

I love good scotch.



Who would win in an arm-wrestling match?

Adam: I'm telling you, I've arm-wrestled Andy before and he's freakin' strong. I guess he was lucky enough to get the Cro-Magnon gene.

Andy: This is a no contest, me.

Your weakness as an artist?

I wish I could draw faster.

Project you wish you could've had instead of your brother?



Adam: None. But I would've jumped at DC's *Countdown* #51 gatefold cover if Andy turned it down. That looked like a lot of fun.

Andy: Sometimes I get so intense on a drawing or a page that I can't tell if the drawing is off a bit or not. I just get way too close to it. When I see it in print, then I'll notice it and it kills me.

Andy: Honestly, there aren't any. But I would have liked to have drawn the monthly *Wolverine* title. That would have been fun.



Most terrifying moment of your life?

Adam: Seeing my then-3-year-old daughter sink in the deep end of a hotel swimming pool.

Andy: Coming back on a plane about 10 years ago and hitting extreme turbulence. The plane was bouncing all over the place. It felt like being dropped and raised in 100-foot increments. And, even before that, I've always hated to fly.

AS TOLD TO TIM LEONG

CREATOR TO WATCH OUT FOR



NIKKI COOK, 25, ARTIST

Upcoming book: *Dogs Day End* (art by Nikki Cook, words by Brian Wood)

Why she's cool: Wood said he's been hoping to work with this native Minnesotan as far back as 2005, when he visited Minneapolis for a local signing. It paid off. Top Shelf Comix will publish their collaboration in 2008. Her style should jibe well with Wood's tale of a man forced to confront the demons of his past. Can't wait till '08? Check out her web comic, *Sack of Puppies*, at the ACT-I-VATE web collective (community.livejournal.com/activate). JK PARKIN



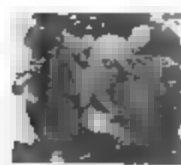
State of Comics: Maryland

CF finds the No. 1 comic spots in the 7th state in the Union



For a small state, Maryland packs in a lot of comic love — A comic-themed museum, a state-sponsored initiative to get comics into schools and the largest distributor of comics in America. And those all stem from just one born-and-raised Baltimorean: Steve Geppi, president and CEO of Diamond Comic Distributors. Here's what some of the other 5,615,726 Maryland residents have to offer.

The Locals:



Frank Cho, 35: The *Mighty Avengers* artist makes his home in Columbia, Md. Cho has been a Maryland resident since moving from Korea as a kid. He got his start as a comic artist doing a cartoon strip for the college paper, *The Diamondback*, at the University of Maryland.



Jose Villarrubia, 45: Originally from Madrid, Villarrubia has taught at Maryland institutions Towson University, The Walters Art Museum, and the Baltimore School for the Arts. He is currently a professor at the Maryland Institute College of Art. Villarrubia illustrated two books with Alan Moore (*The Mirror of Love* and *Voice of The Fire*) and has frequently collaborated as a colorist for artists such as Jae Lee, Paul Pope and J.H. Williams III.



Frank Miller, 50: He might not remember it very well, but Frank Miller was born in Olney, Md., before moving to Vermont as a child. Just to be sure you know which Frank Miller we're talking about, he's the one behind *Sin City*, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, *300* and *Daredevil*; he also played Frank the chemist in *RoboCop 2*.

Top Shops:

Atomic Books
1100 W. 36th St.
Baltimore, MD 21211
(410) 662-4444

Green Alien Head
6 Fleet St.
Annapolis, MD 21401
(410) 263-2080

Big Planet Comics
4908 Fairmont Ave.
Bethesda, MD 20814
(301) 654-6856

Pros and Cons Maryland Comic Book Initiative:

The Maryland State Department of Education is trying to encourage reluctant readers by teaching graphic novels in public schools. Learning about the Civil War takes on a whole new meaning.

Geppi's Entertainment Museum:

Founded by Geppi, this Baltimore museum is the Smithsonian for nerds. The museum's focus is on pop culture, but because of Geppi's background, a fair amount of that pop culture is comic culture.

The Baltimore Comic-Con:

The eighth annual will be a big one. This year's con is Sept. 8-9 and besides hosting the Harvey Awards, the event features guests of honor Mike Mignola, Jim Lee and Adam Hughes.

—ANDREW AVERY

Get Out **LIFE+STYLE**

PAINTING THE TOWN

Colorist Jose Villarrubia, gives a walking tour of Baltimore.

You're originally from Spain — what brought you to Maryland?

I came to study at MICA (Maryland Institute College of Art).

What local spots help to inspire for your work?

My favorite spot is Mount Vernon Square, which is where I live.

As an art instructor in the area, you've worked with a lot of the state's up-and-coming artists. How is Maryland's art scene developing?

I work with some great comic book artists: Brian Ralph, Daniel Krall, Alain Corbel. There are also several great comics artists who live in Baltimore, especially the Insight Studios, with Mark Wheatley and Marc Hempel in particular. Also, friends like John Malloy, who just moved back in town, and MICA is generating a terrific new generation of young cartoonists, the best of which are collected in a new anthology, *Gamut*, edited by Orpheus Collar.

What are you working on?

Alan Moore just asked me to do a tarot deck with him. I am also illustrating a text by him called *The Book of Copulations*. In addition, I am coloring *City of Others*, *Crossing Midnight*, *Army@Love*, *Ultimate X Men*, *Silver Surfer*, *Desolation Jones*, and a couple graphic novels for France and Belgium, including one called *La Chica Bionica* by Paul Pope.

—ANDREW AVERY



Jose Villarrubia



Puck of the Draw

Essex County: *Ghost Stories* cartoonist Jeff Lemire talks hockey

Why did you decide to make hockey part of *Ghost Stories*?

I grew up playing hockey, like many kids in Canada. When I was about 17, I just got more into music and comics and didn't really fit in with the "jocks," so I lost interest and quit playing. But about three or four years ago a couple of my friends and I started meeting up at Toronto's many outdoor rinks in the winter and playing in the afternoons.

Did you worry how the U.S. audience would react to hockey?

Yes I was/am worried about how American readers will respond, but there is a lot more going on in the books than just hockey. Hockey is the spine of *Ghost Stories*, but I'm using it as a vehicle to tell a larger, and hopefully, more universal story that non-hockey fans can appreciate.

Why do you think there are very few sports comics?

In general, the kinds of people who are into sports are not the kind of people who sit around and draw and read comics. Of course I'm generalizing, but for the most part there just isn't a lot of overlap there.

Other than James Sturm's *The Golem's Mighty Swing*, and Baru's *Road To America* (which were both influences on *Ghost Stories*) I can't think of any other significant sports comics. But the genre really is a ripe playground for a cartoonist. Sport is so kinetic in its nature. And, there is so much built in drama in sport as well; it's really easy to tie it in with other story elements and use it as metaphor. Just think of how many great sports films have been made.

Plus, it's big, muscular guys in costumes — comics fans love that, don't they?

I WAS KIND OF A TIMID KID...WITH A DEEP, SEETHING TEMPER.



When did you playing?

When I was 6 or 7. I remember my mom taking me to hockey when I was a kid and telling me I could get a comic at the gas station on the way home if I scored a goal. I scored one in warm-ups and thought that should count.

After some convincing, she agreed, and I remember buying a *Thing* comic. I probably still have it somewhere. So, the hockey-comics connection has always been there I guess.

Did you ever get in any hockey fights?

No, I never played in competitive enough leagues to warrant any fighting, and I was kind of a timid kid (with a deep, seething temper).

How are you as a player?

I play in an amazing league called the Good Times Hockey League of the Arts.

My team is sponsored by a Toronto bar, and we are called the La Hacienda Flying Burritos. The league is really competitive but also very friendly, and all the teams are made up of local musicians, artists and actors.

Because you write about hockey, do people expect you to play better?

No, my family and friends stopped expecting anything from me long, long ago.

So ... are you good?

Put it this way: I'm a better cartoonist than I am a hockey player ... I hope.

—SIMON B



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO: DOG CHICHESTER

Catching up with the *Daredevil* writer that brought back Elektra

What he's best known for: Chichester was the man behind the infamous *Daredevil* story line *Fall From Grace*, in which Elektra returns from the dead (pre-Skrull retcon). Besides writing the *Man Without Fear* for five years, Chichester journeyed on to write for *Defiant*, *DC Comics*, *Dark Horse* and *Platinum*. "At one point I always looked at myself as I was like Brian Dennehy," Chichester says. "I was kind of a character actor that people knew because I was doing enough stuff. I wasn't writing necessarily the A-list titles, but, I was doing a lot of work all over the map."

Why he left: The low point, Chichester says, was when he finally decided to stop trying: "It was after the crash when the whole market really collapsed in on itself. There was less opportunity, less things out there." He had been trying to work something out with Stuart Moore, an editor at DC. "Finally got this guy on the phone one night, and you knew he had picked it up completely by accident. He was like, 'Uh, yeah, umm ...'" Chichester pitched an idea and asked whether he could send Moore some stuff. "And he's like, 'Yeah, yeah, OK. Fine.' And at last I felt (as though) that was an open door. And then as I'm hanging the phone up, he's like, 'Remind me who you are again?'"

What he's up to now: He had done four or five multimedia comics — flat panels that slide to reveal the next ones — that opened up some doors online. "That really sort of made a big push in figuring this is where I wanted to position myself — on the web, interactive, gaming — something to do with computers and writing." Chichester got a temporary gig as an associate creative director at Ogilvy & Mather, a top advertising agency. "Which apparently has never ended, since it's been about a year later now." After working on IBM, his current accounts include companies like Time Warner Cable. "In some ways it's kind of like going back where I started. It's sort of like an uber-editor." He manages teams of art directors and copywriters to create what clients need, be it a website or a banner advertisement. "I oversee what they're doing, make sure that they're staying on message, take a look at the work and make suggestions. Try to push them a little farther and basically try to lead a large group. When I was an editor it was the same thing."

—ERNIE HU

Art School Confidential

Looking for a good school to help you **fine-tune your fine art** and help you go pro? Comic Foundry breaks down the top institutions.

—ALAN HUGHES



The Center for Cartoon Studies

White River Junction, Vt

Faculty:

Includes Steve Bissette, James Kochalka and James Sturm

Notable Grads:

We'll see First class graduated May 2007

Cost:

\$15,150 per year, plus housing

Program:

One or two years

What makes the school different:

"The focus," says CCS co-founder James Sturm. "CCS doesn't have other majors. CCS doesn't teach animation. All the school's resources goes into strengthening a cartooning curriculum. Also the size CCS has about 40 students. Every student receives far more individualized attention than would be possible at large schools."

X-Factor:

To apply, you must submit a comic story about you, a snowman and a robot



The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art

Dover, N.J.

Includes Joe Kubert, Adam Kubert, Andy Kubert and Toby Cypress

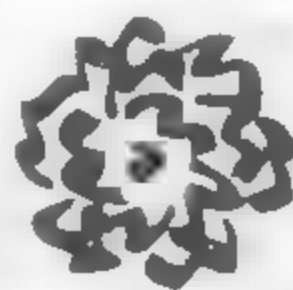
Rick Veitch, Rags Morales, Matt Hollingsworth, Amanda Conner

\$15,950 per year, plus housing

Three years

"We're not attractive to some students, in that we're a technical school," says school administrator Mike Chen. "We do not offer academic courses. Most schools tend to be fine arts in their approach, perhaps more indie. We gear our students to find work in the comic book field."

At the Kubert school, a C is the lowest grade, but it's considered a failing score.



School of Visual Arts, Department of Illustration

New York, N.Y.

Includes Jessica Abel, Tom Hart, Klaus Janson, Phil Jimenez, David Mazzucchelli

Steve Ditko, John Paul Leon, James Jean, Becky Cloonan

Between \$11,960 and \$12,810 per semester, plus housing

Four years

"Ours is an art school, not a commercial art school," says cartooning coordinator Keith Mayerson. "We educate our students to become critical thinkers, wonderful writers, and fantastic artists who create their work not only to succeed in the marketplace, but also to inspire the world in the hope to make it a better place."

You can earn a bachelor's degree in fine arts and can work toward a master's



TINTIN

We break down a classic so you can **sound well-read**, without lifting a page

The Adventures of Tintin began in 1929 as serialized strips in a children's supplement to a Belgian newspaper. The adventures of the young reporter and his dog, Snowy, have been popular for more than 70 years and is Belgium's most popular export, save for the waffle.

Tintin was created by Georges Remi, aka Hergé (his initials backwards, when said aloud).

Early Tintin books, such as the 1930 *Tintin in the Congo*, are notoriously racist and several were redrawn and redialogued by Hergé later in life.

During World War II, Nazi censors closed the newspaper serializing Tintin. Hergé was able to continue Tintin, leading to later accusations he was a Nazi collaborator, though his work at this time displayed no political viewpoint.

Hergé is known as the father of the *ligne claire*, or "clear line," style. He used ink lines of uniform thickness, rather than drawing different thicknesses to emphasize objects in the foreground.

Notable characters include Thomson and Thompson (Dupont et Dupond, in the original French), two mustachioed misfit detectives based partly on Hergé's father and uncle.

—CHRISTOPHER ALLEN

WORDS OF WISDOM

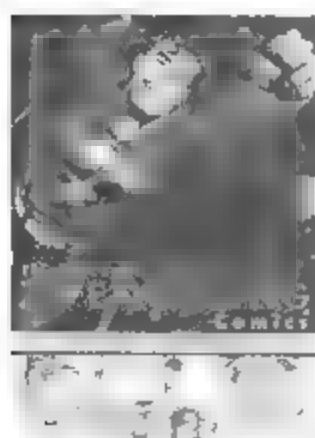
Klaus Janson, author of *The DC Comics Guide to Pencilling Comics*, and professor at SVA in New York, has three considerations before you choose.

1 In order to work in comics you have to possess a certain ability to draw. That means that no matter what school you choose, there needs to be life drawing classes and a good teacher.

2 The theory behind storytelling. At some point, no matter how good your drawing might be, if the storytelling ability is ineffective, you will only get to a certain point. The capacity to communicate information to the reader in a clear and entertaining way is at least as important, if not more so, than the capacity to draw well.

3 Anyone entering graphic storytelling these days would be well advised to know computers and Adobe PhotoShop. It's becoming more and more essential to the medium, and any school that doesn't have a computer class in its curriculum should be avoided.

AS TOLD TO LESLEY NICHOLS



MICHAEL KUPPERMAN'S FAVORITE JOKES

The comical creator of *Tales Designed to Thrizzle* jokes around.

1 This is a joke in the sense of a line, and please feel free to try it yourself. It works every time. All you need to do is wait until someone mentions a movie that you saw on an airplane, and you say: "Saw it on an airplane - I tried to walk out." It always gets the laughs. I did not come up with this line.

2 Now here's a good old-fashioned-Dixie-Cup kind of joke, suitable for children and strangers. It's the joke equivalent of a Peppermint patty. **Q:** What did Schwarzenegger say when they asked him to be in a movie about 18th-century composers? **A:** I'll be Bach.

3 This line is one that I did come up with, and I think it's very good, although it's one that almost nobody would 'get' or respond to. You might have to do some digging on IMDb before you'd 'get' it. "I thought *Auto Focus* was going to be about a man who buys a car that makes him look Jewish." (You see, there was this movie called *Focus*, and it was about how William H. Macy buys a pair of glasses that make him look Jewish, and it exposes the anti-Semitism in small town '50s America. It's by Arthur Miller, and while I haven't seen it, I understand it's not as funny as it sounds. *Autofocus*, of course, was the story of Bob Crane's descent into the sexual netherworld. It starred Greg Kinnear, Willem Dafoe and Maria Bello. Now you see how hilarious that joke is.)



Besides producing *Tales Designed to Thrizzle* for Fantagraphics, Kupperman is writing for a new comedy series starring Peter Serafinowicz.

AS TOLD TO TIM LEONG



Lending Laws

Let a friend **borrow a book**? Still waiting to get it back?

Comic fans are a bit evangelical about the medium, they want to spread the good stuff to their friends and maybe make a new fan or three. If you have a comic you really like, you might be tempted to loan it out. But before you do, consider Bedford, Pa. bookmobile librarian Justin Jordan's rules for lending.

Know Who You're Lending To

Jordan says: If somebody brings back a book, and it's been eaten and digested by some sort of cloven-hoofed animal, I am not likely to give him more books. Similarly, if you know one of your friends is rough on books, you might want to reconsider loaning him anything that you care about.

Make Sure They Know You Want It Back

Jordan says: This seems obvious, but making sure they know you want it back makes a difference—especially if you put a specific time period on the loan. No need to be a jerk, though. A simple, "Joe wants to read this, so if you can get it back by whenever," will go a long way.

Don't Lend More Than One Book

Jordan says: One book per person. The library doesn't have this rule, but we have 50,000 books and government funding, which you probably don't. This way, if your friend suddenly develops schizophrenia and builds a nest using all available paper, you're not out your entire West Coast Avengers.

Do Digital

Jordan says: If you've got a Mac and a webcam, you can digitize your entire collection with Delicious Library (www.delicious-monster.com). You use your cam to take pictures of your books' barcodes and the program does the rest. You can browse, search, sort and track who has which book (with address book integration).



MARK MILLAR WOULD KILL TO WORK WITH...

"Adam Hughes or Alex Ross. They seem to exist in a parallel universe of uber-artists and seem forever out of the reach of mere mortals. I've been very lucky with the guys I've worked with in recent years and very snotty/fussy about the guys who draw my books. But these guys are maybe the only two left I actually have a longing to work with. I buy anything I see their names on. Even if it's just a little scribble."

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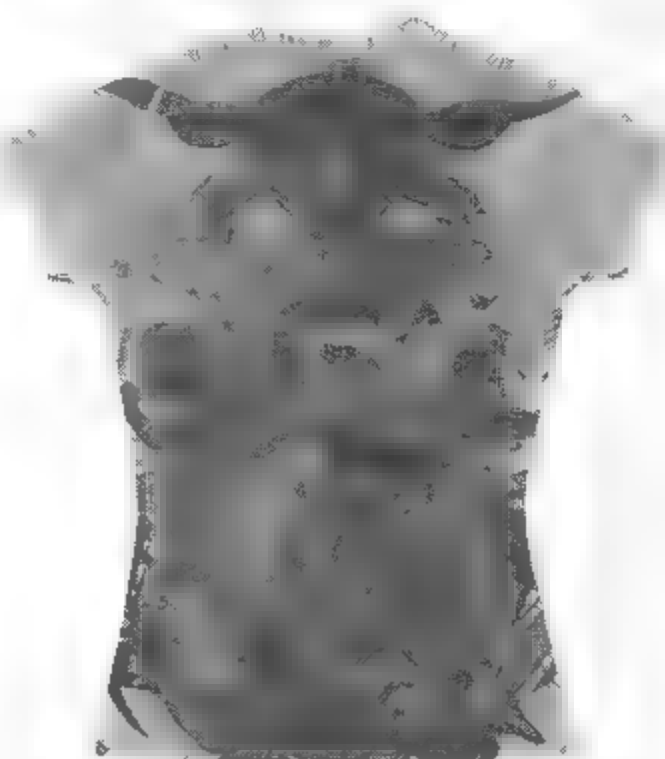
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GIRLS GONE STYLED

Tired of only wearing Wonder Woman? Here's six tees even Lynda Carter would be jealous of.



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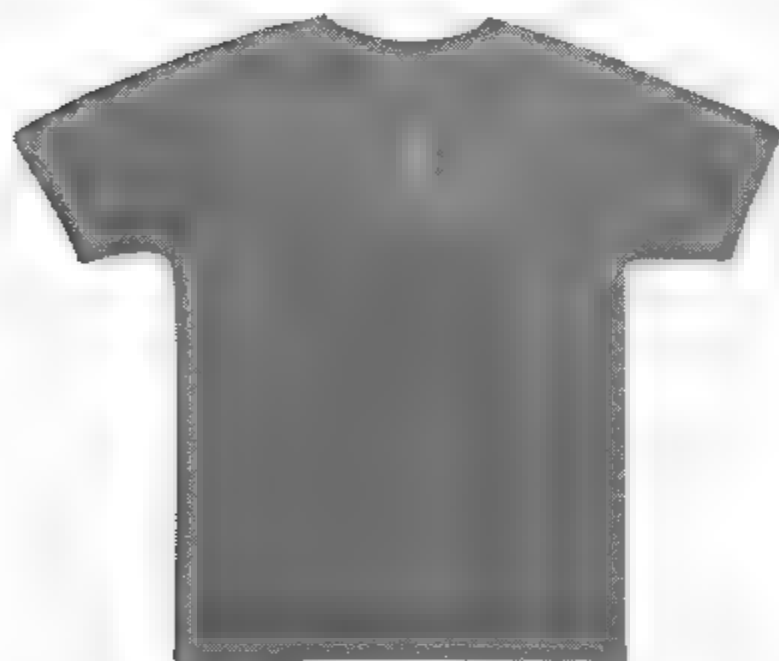


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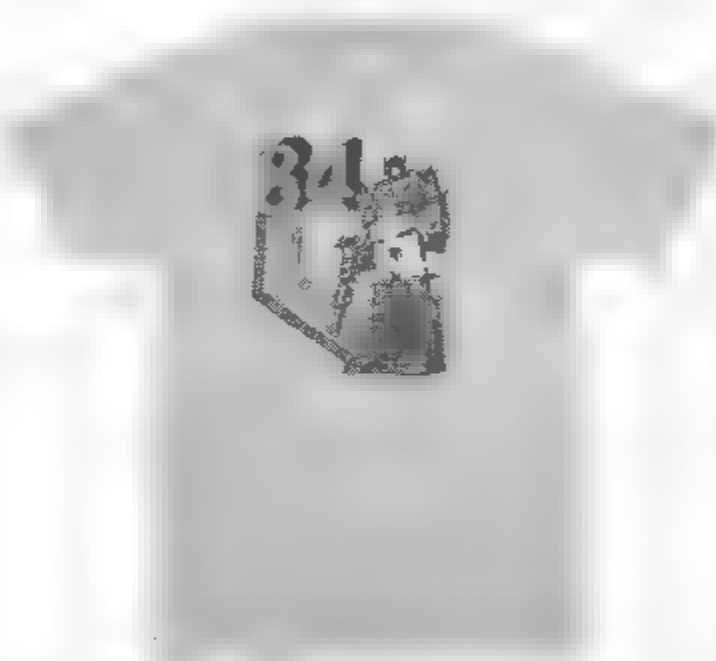


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Form Feet and Legs

Reebok's V-Pack, a new Voltron-inspired sneaker collection, has four styles that represent each lion.

Reebok

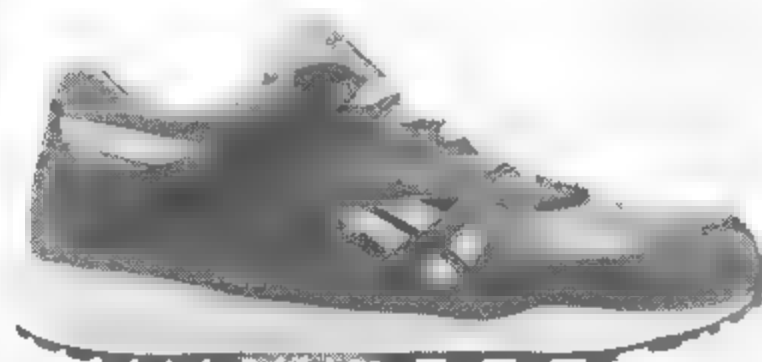
Each of the shoes will come with its corresponding Voltron lion robot toy.



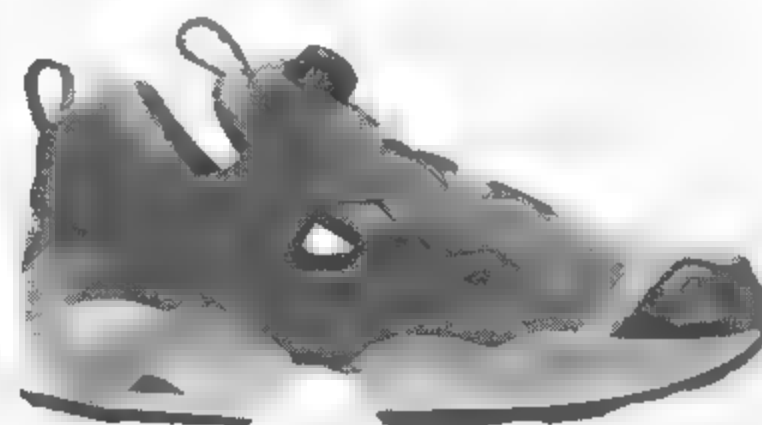
THE SHOES



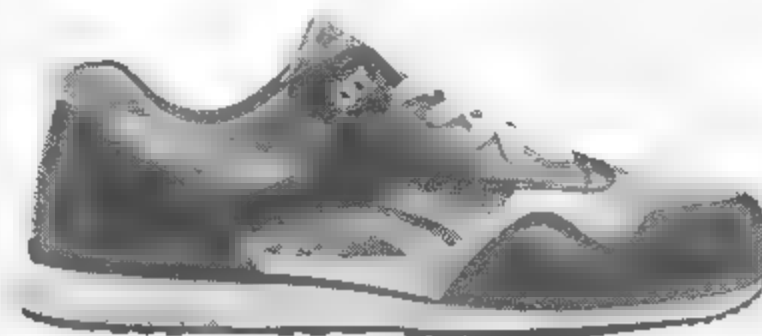
YELLOW LION
Pump Omni Lite



BLUE LION
Ventuator



RED LION
Insta Pump Fury



GREEN LION
ERS Racer



BLACK LION
Court Victory Pump





THE JUDAS CONTRACT

How a lunch at a restaurant in Queens changed **The Teen Titans** forever.

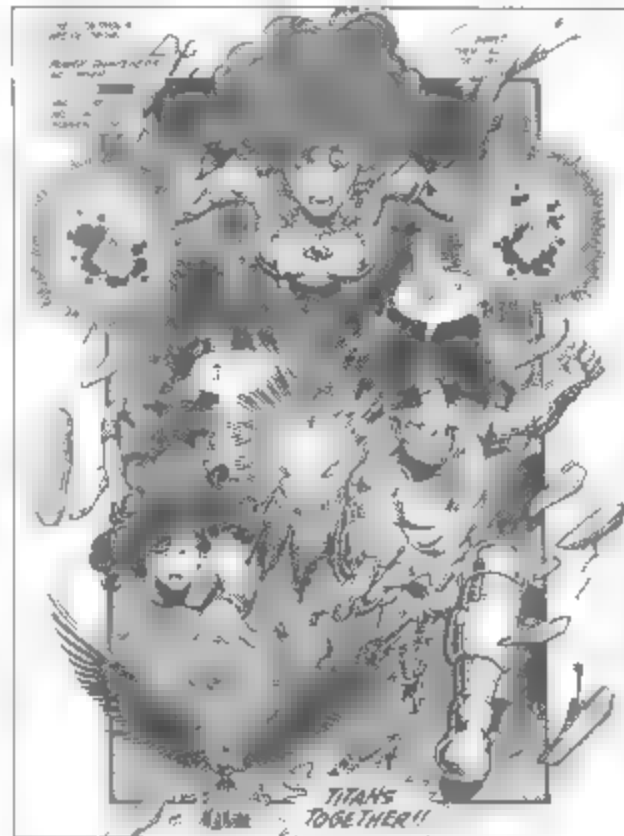
By S. Scott Fernandez

In 1982, *The New Teen Titans* was DC's No. 1 book, outselling all their other comics 2-to-1. But for writer Marv Wolfman and artist George Perez, that wasn't enough. So they unveiled *The Judas Contract*, a story that would change the Teen Titans, reader expectation and team storytelling forever.

A year and a half before, the duo met for a several-hour lunch at a restaurant near their houses – both lived just a few blocks from each other in Flushing, Queens, and they met often for these plotting lunches. What they came up with up with was a story that would turn conventional comic wisdom on its ear, featuring the evil-to-the-bone, 15-year-old beauty, Terra. With powers to control the earth around her, Terra was as powerful she as she was ruthless, though fans bought into her cute kid persona and always figured she'd reform herself.

"We wanted to create a new Teen Titan who was going to be a young girl who was more evil than anyone could possibly imagine," Wolfman says. The vanguard concept came at a time when villains were becoming more human in comics. "We had gotten into a world where everybody had to have an explanation for their evil, that giving villains a certain humanity made you feel sorry they were evil," Wolfman says. "My thing was going back to doing something that showed this person was a bad seed. She was born bad, she stayed bad, she was so bad that she could convince you of anything, and she would die bad, knowing that nobody would believe it."

The real key to Wolfman and Perez's success for shocking the readers was familiarity. Terra's act came around the same time as Kitty Pryde's debut with the X-Men, and the similarities between the two characters were impossible to ignore. Both were teenagers, pretty and the youngest members of their respective teams. What's more, in a bit of a cre-



ative coincidence, Wolfman almost ended up using the name Ariel as one of the early character monikers for Starfire, but he had to abandon those plans after *X-Men* writer Chris Claremont told him he was using it as an alias for Kitty Pryde.

Wolfman was an *X-Men* editor for a few issues, and he wasn't impressed with Kitty Pryde. He decided to use the fan comparisons of Terra to Kitty Pryde to work in his favor. "I decided to take advantage of the fact that everyone would assume that she's a Kitty Pryde type character and totally turn them all around," Wolfman says. "It was never planned to be a rip-off or anything. The character came first, then the realization that the X-Men also had a young kid in it. I was there and the decision from day one was that, 'OK, let's use that, let's play against it. Let's play against everything the readers are expecting and throw them for a loop.'"

Terra wasn't the only big character turn in *The Judas Contract*. Batman sidekick Robin threw out his tights and changed into the darker, more adult Nightwing. The Batman editors wanted Robin back in the Batman books after Robin's extended stay in *Teen Titans*. But Wolfman was hesitant because he and Perez had

changed Robin so drastically that turning him from the more mature adult back to that fun-loving kid would damage the character.

"It's one of the few times that I used the power of *The Teen Titans* sales to get what I wanted," Wolfman says. "What I suggested was they let us keep Dick Grayson and let them have Robin, and make a new Robin and make that a special thing in the book. And they liked that idea a lot, which meant we were able to change him over into an adult character. We would've loved to have gotten him out of those silly short pants years before. It was OK when he was 9; it wasn't OK when he was 18."

In the end, the story was a smashing success with the industry. "I don't think I ever got more cred from the industry than with the story," Wolfman says. "That story was really well-received in the same way with *Watchmen* and *Dark Knight* later were." The fan reaction to Terra, however, was the real surprise to Wolfman. "We knew we were going to make her a character people liked, but we did nothing to make you like her. We had her be sarcastic, nasty; we started her off as a terrorist – we did everything to make you not like this character, except the fact that she's cute. But people loved her, and after it was revealed she was a villain and everything was setup very clearly, people still liked the character."

It's partly why the story lives on as a DC classic. It's already adapted in the *Teen Titans* cartoon show (after which Wolfman received more letters asking him to bring Terra back) and is one of three stories that DC is adapting as an animated feature for a straight-to-DVD release, with *Judas* slated for 2008. Wolfman co-wrote the screenplay with Tom DeSantos. Except minor adjustments, Wolfman says, "the story is the same story from beginning, middle and end, it's just how we get to those places may be a little bit different."

**LET'S PLAY
AGAINST
EVERYTHING
THE
READERS
ARE
EXPECTING
AND
THROW
THEM FOR
A LOOP.**



DARICK ROBERTSON

The famed *Transmetropolitan* and *The Boys* artist on family, deadlines and his aborted music career.

As told to Ernie Hu

I want to keep my edge sharp, since comfort can breed apathy.

I don't reference true violent stuff too often. I tried once, and I got queasy seeing real violence.

I have been blessed with one of those great wives you read about these older artists sticking with for years and years.

Considering the level of

gore and violence in movies and video games, I find it funny that *The Boys* would even raise an eyebrow.

I FIND SOME OF THE CORPORATE GUIDELINES THAT RULE EVERY ARTIST UNDER

THE SAME PROCESS A BIT ANNOYING, BUT I UNDERSTAND THE NECESSITY OF IT.

THE WORST DAY DRAWING IS BETTER THAN MY BEST DAY FRYING CHICKEN.

I had a brief year or two where I thought I might be able to tackle a music career, but it's all about the comics now.

GOOD SCRIPTS. A WRITER WHO'S INVOLVED. AN EDITOR I CAN CONNECT WITH.

THE MIDNIGHTER WITH BRIAN K. VAUGHAN THE WHOLE ISSUE WAS FULL OF JUST THE MIDNIGHTER ON SPLASH PAGES OR THREE-PANEL PAGES AND DESTROYING CYBORGS FOR 22 PAGES. I COULD JUST GO CRAZY.

I want to create an appearance of competence and propaganda

Warren Ellis woke me up to the fact that like a lot of Americans, I used to focus solely on my little world and had only a cursory knowledge of what was really going on. I don't let myself slack off like that any more, and I feel I have a better understanding of geopolitical events than I did in 1997.

I look to find my own way to make the heroic characters seems less than heroic without making them look evil

When I get angry and scared, I draw from that place just like I did when I was younger and hungrier.

Now that I'm inking my own work, I believe it's

making me a different penciller.

Deadlines are very, very important. Especially when paying taxes.

Garth Ennis got me to travel more, and I have been to places in Ireland

most Americans will never bother to go, and that experience alone teaches you so very much about how the world outside your door is.

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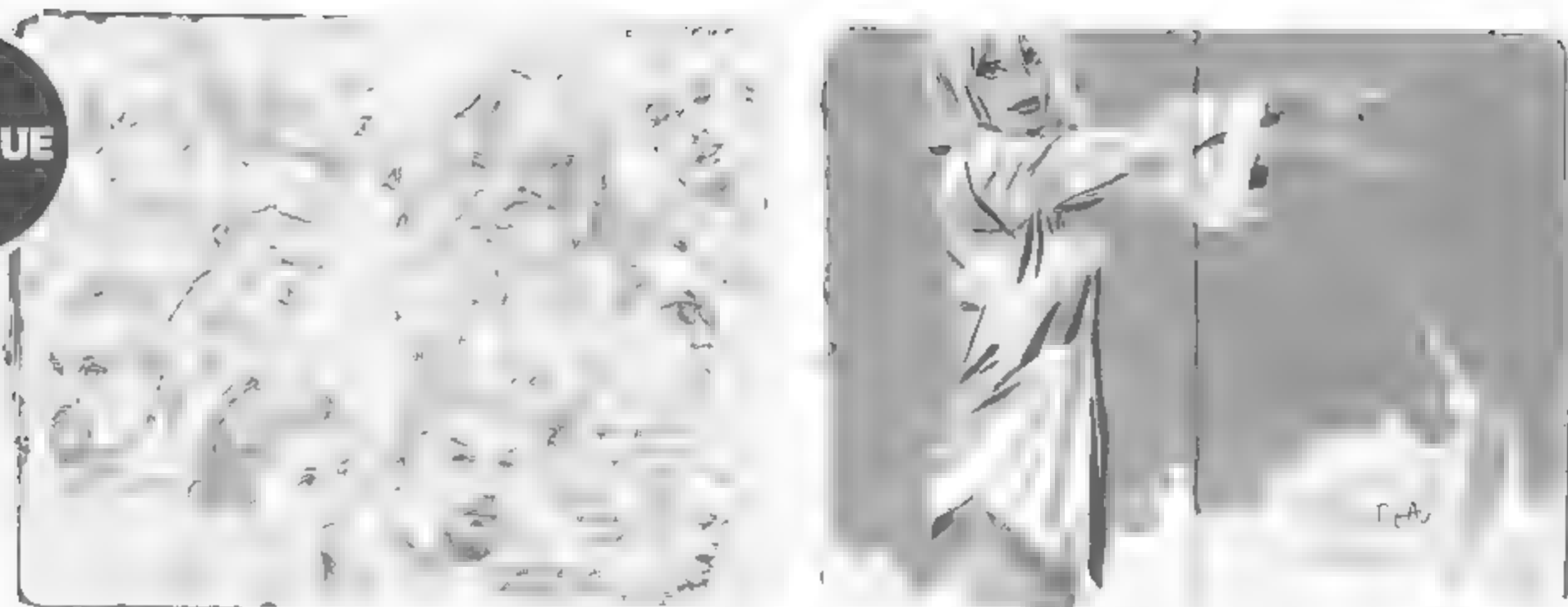
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SEAN PHILLIPS + DUNCAN FEGREDO

The famed artists riff on creating their new art jam book, *Intersections*.

As told to Chan Gordon

Duncan: So, we were kicking back after the Bristol UK comic expo 2005, having a drink, talking con sketchbooks, among other things

Sean: That was the weekend Liam Sharp launched his *Event Horizon* book. We thought we could do something similar, but without the barbarians and half-naked women. We talked about self-publishing a compilation flip book of old stuff with maybe a new color center section. Then we thought we'd make it difficult for ourselves and do a full-color book of all new work, drawings, paintings, but no comic stuff. We do enough of that in our day jobs.

D: That was exactly it. We talked about sketchbooks that other artists had done and so many of them were (understandably) full of steroid fueled heroes and semi-draped dominatrix types. And elf chicks. And guns. And of course some of that may even have permeated our otherwise well-intentioned attempt to avoid such things, but hey, best intentions and all that. I think we saw this book as an opportunity to create sketches and paintings that we couldn't explore within the realms of our day jobs. I mean, for a start, I don't paint nearly enough — usually I only unearth my crusty old tubes of paint when I have a cover to paint, which is just crazy. So the book gave us a framework, quite literally a canvas on which we would both come up with new material. Being an actual book also gave us our very loose brief and that

was that, in some way, however loose, the images we created should relate to each other in a sequential way — in much the same way as we relate to each other.

I should say that what this book isn't, as some wag on his blog suggested due to my poorly considered copy, is a bunch of scribbles and doodles drawn by two drunk guys ...

S: Well, to be fair, our book does have some red wine stains!

D: Although thinking about that, Sean — good idea for a sequel?

S: So, real life gets in the way for a while, but a couple of months later I post you a new, almost blank Moleskine sketchbook. All I've done in it is to paste in some type and a photo as a title page, and I asked you to draw whatever you want on the first blank spread. The idea was that you'd then send the book back to me, and I'll draw the next spread inspired by yours.

D: That was no mere red wine stain, that was a carefully staged motor response rendered with the most readily available dye, a Jackson Pollack-esque retort to your preceding spread in the book. In red wine, yes. It's Art, I tell you, capital 'A'!

So yes, essentially we were playing drawing Consequences, a visual conversation. Some of our exchanges would spin off



into several artistic exchanges, whilst some, like many conversations, would end briefly. Some of the pieces relate directly to things going on in our personal lives — like when I visited you and we went to Tenby [in Wales], I hadn't been on a beach in a while and forgot how big the sky is when you look out to sea. That kick-started several pieces. But it's best left to the readers' interpretation. Oddly enough, I find, looking back over the book, I'm reading into it things I'm not sure were really there, or maybe they were but I just don't recall. But isn't that the way the game Consequences works? One person writes a line, passes it on to the next, who adds a line and passes it on, and so on. Sometimes it reads as nonsense, but then you also sometimes get a weird synergy and something weird and new is created. Or am I talking a load of old art here?

S: Isn't that for the readers to decide? ☺

NOTES TO SELF

Wit and wisdom from *Death Note*'s Light Yagami.
Who knew quotes from mass murderers could be so inspirational?

By Jason Wright

This world is rotten. Rotten people should be killed off to cleanse this world.

You can't ever win if you're always on the defensive; to win, you have to attack.

Looks are all that counts.

'Probably' means nothing.

No matter what world, the God of that world creates the rules.

There are a lot of stupid people out there.

I'm going to trust everyone here. But I'm sorry to say that we probably can't trust the whole police force.

Do I have the guts?

I'm going to make the whole world know I'm here.

Let me cool my head for a while.

We won't be able to do anything unless we're all on the same page.

I can't quit.

I'm going to make you sorry for messing with me.

The world needs to be cleaned up.

Pretend to be confident and to know everything.

I'll marry you, so quit your job.

You gonna sulk like a baby?

I could never play with a woman's emotions like that.

Show some energy.

How about now?
You ready to get to work?

As long as I'm around, you won't be alone.

The world would be better without certain people.

I don't have time to waste.

Lazy people who do not bother to find a place for themselves in society will only have a bad influence on society.

**Good ...
or evil ...
everything
depends on the
results.**



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WHATEVERS.

A short story from inside your local comics shop
By Ian Brill

A year ago I started working at Cathy's Books, a large but independent bookstore in the city. For those of us who worked there, the inventory room was the Dungeon, and we, the Dungeon Monkeys. Above our heads students, academics, rich tourists and sometimes even an author or two walked around searching for the next book that would entertain them at bus stops or before bedtime. Those shelves would have been bare if it weren't for us, three at a time, pushing carts around in this dusty basement. A few of the customers would pick up a graphic novel. Something by Alan Moore or Frank Miller before he went crazy. Maybe some manga, which I never understood. But down there among the boys, the main concerns were always what was happening in the two realities more exciting than ours: Marvel and DC.

"I hate it when they change artists at all, but I really hate it when the guy you like just does the first issue." This was Dennis, a co-worker, around my age who had been working there longer than me.

"Oh, I know. Why can't these guys hit deadlines anymore?" Ron retorted. He was older than Dennis and me by about 10 years and could school both of us in comic book knowledge.

"But sometimes though, when there's a bad artist, I just get so used to it that when they put someone good or whatever on the book, I don't like it," Dennis said.

There was a time when I couldn't imagine having conversations like this at work. But in the Dungeon, the staff depended on nerdy conversations. It was how we'd forget how tedious our job was.

My first day in the Dungeon, I worried that I'd look like a clumsy idiot next to the veterans. But then, within the first hour, Ron and Dennis started discussing *Infinite Crisis* #7, and I knew I had an in. I didn't even have to worry that my dislike of the comic would be unpopular; they hated it more than I did. I found out these guys had been as pumped up for all the *Infinite Crisis* stuff as me, but that none of us felt satisfied by how it all ended.

This put me greatly at ease on the new job. As the conversations kept going, occasionally drifting into such non-comics topics as role-playing games and the Carpenter/Russell oeuvre, I didn't feel self-conscious asking them where certain books went or where to throw things away. They were happy to help. I was just another Dungeon Monkey.

Dennis and I really hit it off. Our lives had gone in similar directions. We had both come to the city at the same time, both went to college for a bit before finding out it wasn't for us, and we both had a series of crappy jobs until we landed in the Dungeon.

Dennis took some art classes in college and we discussed that for a while, and I asked about drawing comics. He said he had some ideas, but nothing he took seriously. I told him I had always wanted to write some of the DC and Marvel characters, and I figured that even with our small amount of talent, we should try to come up with an idea for our own character. We had a hard time coming up with anything, though. There would be neat ideas, but something was always missing.

"The fact that he can live in multiple dimensions at once is interesting, but how does he fight bad guys that way?" Dennis asked early on in the creation of our character, "The Reality Surfer."

"Well, there would be bad guys only he could see," I answered, although to be honest I hadn't really given it much thought until Dennis started asking.

"Okay. What would be his special power, though?"

"Hmm...I don't know. I like super-strength, stuff like that."

"Everyone has super-strength, though. What could he get from being a multi-dimensional traveler?"

My brain didn't respond to Dennis's question with answers. It responded with worries of failure, worries that I just wasn't creative. In the part of my brain that should have been churning out the mythos for this character, there were questions instead: *what is the fucking point? Why should anyone care? Are you doing this just to forget how pathetic and pointless your life is?*

"What do you think about designing for video games?" While I was battling small demons, Dennis had already changed the subject. "Like designing the characters and everything?"

"That'd be cool, I guess. But you're more of a video game fan than me," I said.

"Yeah. I guess it doesn't matter what you end up in, it's pretty much the same. Just come up with some cool villains or something and the rest writes itself."

"I suppose so."

First it was video games; next it would be skateboard design or extreme-sports movies. That was the thing about Dennis. He had some talent but no focus. He had dreams of getting out of there but nothing solid behind them. Maybe it was desperation, but who could blame him? Who could stand being in an office all, or even the Dungeon, for the rest of your life? I wished I could supply some focus for Dennis, but I wasn't much better myself.

Whenever I thought of a story I should write down, I'd get distracted by something. I remember once trying to find some research on the theories of alternate dimensions. After straying a bit from the Wikipedia path, I ended up reading about the history of DC's multiple Earths. It was so much more interesting to me than trying to come up with something new; I spent the rest of the night hitting comic news sites and discussing what DC was going to do with the concept in the future.

Sometimes, it's just easier to go a message board and complain about what's wrong with a current story than start a new one.

Now that I finally had a job, I could catch up on the stories I'd dropped due to a lack of funds. I'd heard really good things about Mark Millar's *Spider-Man* run. Some said it was Marvel's *Hush*, so I figured I'd pick up some copies with my employee discount.

The graphic novel section was surprisingly well-kept this time. The first time I was there just as a customer, it was a mess. Kids would leave books on the floor or out of order, and no one would bother to clean it up. You'd have the first Jim Lee *Superman* book next to some indie book while the second one was next to a lot of Marvel stuff. I guess back then none of the booksellers knew what to do with the section. Now things have changed.

"Hey, can I help you find anything?" It was a young woman, putting away an armload of Vertigo books. I'd seen her before. She had light brown skin, long dark brown hair and glasses. I'd learn later she was a mix of black, Italian and Irish. She looked like what all humans will look like in the future.

"How long have you been working here, if I can ask?"

"Uh, just a week now. They knew I liked graphic novels so my first assignment was to spruce this place up."

"Yeah I remember you. When I had the interview with Bert, you were the one right after me."

Her eyes slowly got wider. "Oh, right! I'm sorry, what's your name again?"

"Jack."

"Jack, I'm Andrea. Good to meet you, again. But where do you work? I haven't seen you...well, obviously I haven't seen you since the interview."

"I'm in inventory, pushing around carts and waiting for the next shipments of books or whatever."

SOMETIMES, IT'S JUST EASIER TO GO A MESSAGE BOARD AND COMPLAIN ABOUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH A CURRENT STORY THAN START A NEW ONE.

"Whatever, huh? You sure make it sound exciting." I was disarmed by that one, but Andrea didn't wait for a response. "No, that's cool. I hardly ever get down there myself. Overhauling this place has been enough of a task."

"Yeah, I noticed. When I was here browsing after my interview, I couldn't help noticing how unorganized it was."

"Oh, I know. Don't get me started. I've finally gotten them to let me give Vertigo its own section and not just place the books with the rest of the DC stuff. That's what I'm doing now." She started placing the collected editions of *Fables* on the shelf.

I guess I could have just picked up the *Spider-Man* trade, exchanged pleasantries and gotten out. But I still wanted to talk to Andrea. She seemed like she could use the mental stimulation while putting away books.

"So, uh, I'm picking up the Mark Millar *Spider-Man*. Did you ever read that?"

At first there was a bit of a pause. I wasn't sure if she'd heard me, even though I was right next to her and we were having a conversation. Instead all I saw was someone dutifully putting away books. When she finally replied, her eyes still never left the shelf.

"Actually, I'm not that much into superheroes. I know about them, especially from doing this job. But it feels like they're not into telling new stories. It feels like they're written by grown-up fanboys who just want to do over the stories they read as kids."

Huh

"Well then, what do you suggest? What do you think makes up good comics?" That wasn't meant to sound as harsh as it did, but it did.

This time there was an even bigger pause. She actually stopped shelving and looked at the ground in deep thought. She didn't seem mad or anything. Actually, there seemed to be something resembling a smirk on her face. Soon, although it didn't feel soon, she filed through the books she was holding and handed me one.

"Here, this isn't too far off from what you're used to, and it's good. Really good. You don't even have to buy it. If you return it within about a week I'm sure no one will notice."

It was a *Sandman* trade. *A Game of You*. I had heard plenty about *Sandman*, certainly since Neil Gaiman had become such a big name in the book world, but when I started reading comics the series was just ending, and I was too young to buy it. I'd see the trades on the shelves at the comic store, but for whatever reason, they never interested me. Once, in a college class, I had to defend comics from a professor who saw the rise of graphic novels as proof of the growing illiteracy in the American public. I namedropped Gaiman as an example of someone "respectable," because that's one of the people you're supposed to namedrop, but I'd still never actually read his stuff.

Looking closer at the book, I saw it was actually the fifth book in the series. "Is this a good one to start me off with?" I asked her. "I mean, there are four books before it."

"Yeah, and they're good too, but this is when Neil hits his stride."

"Neil, is it? Well, okay, I'll check this out. You know, I can actually name the number of trades I've read on one hand." She didn't deem that worthy of a response, even after I waited for the end of the pause. "All right, so I'll check back with you after I'm done."

"Cool." She let out an affirmative grunt and started in on the *Preacher* section.

A Game of You haunted me. I couldn't even finish it in one sitting. I had to read it over the course of two nights, right before I went to sleep. It had all this fantasy, starting with a giant cat or something getting shot down in New York, and yet it spent so much time with these characters, these women. At first I was confused, wondering why so much of the story dealt with things like these two lesbians and a pregnancy, but as I read on I saw how all the events happening in Barbie's fantasy dreamland reflected what was happening in her life, or the other way around.

I had never even liked fantasy, books like *Chronicles of Narnia*, but I got this.

When I finished the last page of the story, closing the back cover felt momentous. I sat there staring, not at it but through it. For a short amount of time, maybe 30 seconds, my sight and all my other senses didn't matter. I was in my head, thinking about the characters, about the power of comics, about real life. I started wondering about Andrea, and what she saw in this comic. I placed the book in my backpack to give it back to her.

I actually did get that first Millar *Spider-Man* trade, but after *A Game of You*, it just kind of washed over me. With the *Sandman* book, I think it meant so much to me because I really had to spend some time with it, had to really be alert while reading. I just knew, while I was zipping my backpack, this tome lying heavy inside it, that nothing would ever grab me so tightly again. This was the first time I felt like the comic was in control of me, and not the other way around. I liked that feeling.

I was going to give the book back to Andrea at lunch. While working and waiting for my break, I was of two minds. A part of me was the same old Dungeon Monkey, but the other was this new "Enlightened Reader," who now looked at the previous discussions Ron, Dennis and I had with skepticism.

My new attitude might have given me insight into other comics, but it still didn't really help me with the comics I wanted to create. I didn't know what it was yet, but there was still something I needed to confront before I could get serious about that.

I started to talk to Dennis about other jobs. This began as a discussion about what The Reality Surfer's alter-ego Corey Harper's job should be, but we soon trailed off.

"Hey, what do you think of content editor for a video site?" Dennis asked

"Like YouTube?" I said.

"Yeah, but I don't think they hire anymore. I mean all these new sites that are going to do what YouTube does but...better."

"Better how?"

"Just more shit, better shit. Funnier stuff. Make sure the really funny stuff is up front as soon as people open the site."

"Are you talking to anybody right now, Dennis?"

"Uh, I saw an ad on Craigslist about it. I hadn't even heard of the website before, but they look pretty cool. They want someone who has completed college, but I think I can impress them."

"Oh yeah? What are you going to say?"

"I'm going to show them that I know all about their genre. I know Internet videos. I know what makes people want to go 'oh shit, I got to send this to some friends.'"

"You're going to tell them you're the average American 21-year-old male?"

"C'mon man. It's more than that. I can tell them I learned shit here. I learned what people like when they're out shopping for books, some music, whatever."

"Whatever."

"Yeah."

Lunch time was over. "I think I'm pretty tired of whatever's now, Dennis," I said.

I had to leave the break room after that conversation with Dennis. I feared that his aimless passion, passion without something to be passionate about, would infect me.

Heading outside for lunch, I was lucky enough to spot Andrea entering the Thai place across the street. I caught up with her to return the book and talk some more over servings of red curry.

As we sat down, I took the book out of my backpack and handed it to her. "I've never read anything like it, really. It's just... it felt smarter and more compelling, more loving than any other comic I read."

"More loving?"

I tried to verbalize the feeling I had, sounding like a 5-year-old who had just come back from his first movie. "Yeah, I guess that's a weird thing to say. But what I mean is that the characters in that book just felt like... humans. They felt like people I know. I could believe everything they went through, even though it dealt with talking stuffed animals, because I could get all the emotional stuff."

"That's good. Yeah, I couldn't read anything if it didn't have characters I could really feel for." It seemed the more excited I got the calmer she got. She was starting in on her food so she wasn't even looking at me, but I

WHEN I FINISHED THE LAST PAGE OF THE STORY, CLOSING THE BACK COVER FELT MOMENTOUS. I SAT THERE STARING, NOT AT IT BUT THROUGH IT. FOR A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME MY SIGHT AND ALL MY OTHER SENSES DIDN'T MATTER.

sensed she had resigned herself to a feeling of advantage.

I didn't really have much more I could add without sounding like a fool, but the silence was just too awkward. At least, it was for me. In the Dungeon I pretended to be high-minded, but I couldn't be that around this woman. I decided to tell her about the conversation I had with Dennis.

"It's like, while he's got this dull boring job his mind in the totally opposite direction, to the point of being unrealistic."

"Unrealistic how?"

"I mean, does he think just walking into some dot com company's office and telling them 'Hey, I'm the new content manager' is going to work? That's what it sounds like he thinks will happen."

"Well it's one way to make a change." Andrea proved more and more to be a challenge to me. When it came to loaning me books that was cool, but I wasn't ready to be challenged when it came to personal stuff. Not that I let that be known.

"I think it's real cool that he has those aspirations," she continued. "It's clear he's set on achieving something."

"But he has no idea how he's going to achieve it."

"Do you?"

"Do I know how he's going to achieve it? No, why would I know that?"

"Well, I just figured if you knew he was doing everything wrong, then you'd know how to do something right." That sense of advantage had not dissipated.

"How do you mean?"

"Jack, you have the same job as him, you're the same age and you have the same hobby. You're very similar people. I wish you could hear yourself criticize him. They're criticisms anyone could level against you. Do you have any idea how unaware of yourself you are?"

I didn't know what to say. As far as self-awareness goes, I can say I'm pretty sure I looked stupid, with a bewildered look on my face and noodles dangling from my fork.

I went back to the Dungeon. I don't usually feel sicker after lunch than before it. There was a weird feeling as Dennis and I put books away in silence. Finally, I said "fuck it" and just pierced the feeling with a question.

"Dennis, why do you care about The Reality Surfer?"

"Why do I care? Because we created him."

"No, no. That's why you care about the product. I'm talking about if he were real. If he were a person why would we care about him?"

"Let's see...um..."

"That's it. That's it exactly. We come up with

all this stuff for the outside of the character but we have no sense of what's going on in his head. I mean, how does he feel?"

Dennis started getting serious. "How does he feel going from one reality to another? Okay, okay...I know. He's confused. He's alienated. He sees all these different places but he has no sense of home." Talking about this brought something out of Dennis I hadn't seen before. Maybe he was always this serious about the character, and we had just never discussed it.

"Home? That makes sense. Yeah, that's good - or at least a start."

"Oh, thanks." I couldn't tell if Dennis was grateful for that comment or annoyed.

"Dennis, that was really good. Thanks for that." He had every right to just torture me now.

"It's cool. Yeah, I'm glad you brought it up. I had some ideas for him, but I suppose it's important to focus on one aspect rather than just bouncing around without a plan with a lot of 'whatevers.'"

"Was I a dick when I said that?"

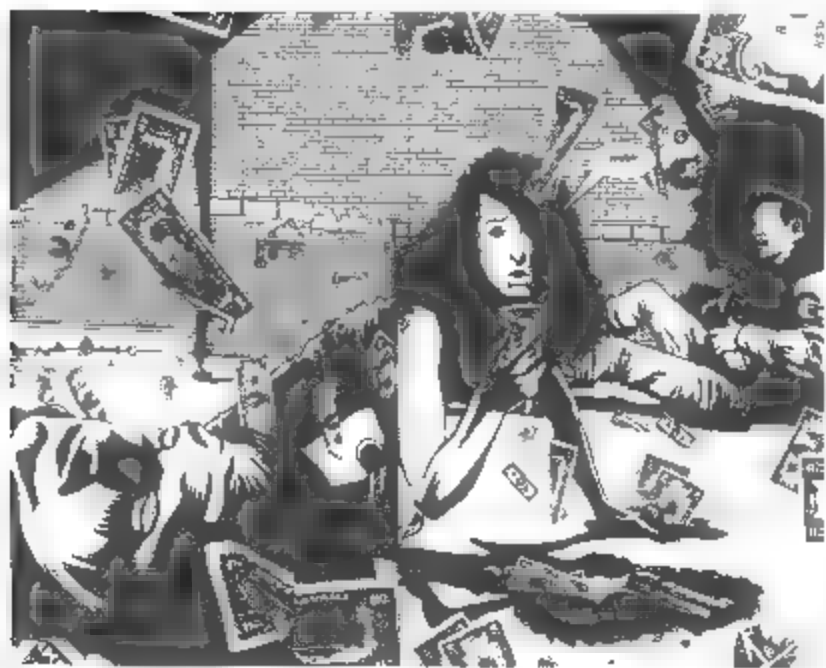
"Sort of. Just listen to some of my ideas. I think I've got a real solid take on what Corey's job should be."

Those questions in the back of my mind were still there and still plagued me. But at least now I had started to answer them. With Dennis's help, of course. ☺

LIFE IMITATES ART

COMIC FOUNDRY
PAYS FASHION
HOMAGE TO SOME OF
OUR FAVORITE BLACK-
AND-WHITE BOOKS.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY VIKRAM TANK
STYLING BY SAMANTHA RUBIN
HAIR BY GIOVANNI GUNTOLI, MAKEUP BY SARAH FRANZESE



JINX BY BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS, (IMAGE COMICS)
12TH STREET BY CYNTHIA VINCENT TOP
EARNEST SEWN JEANS







**SLEEPWALK: AND OTHER
STORIES**

BY IATHRIAN TOWNE

DRAWN AND
QUARTERLY

THE FIRST STORY IN THE COLLECTION IS A SHORT STORY ABOUT A MAN WHO IS A SLEEPWALKER. THE SECOND STORY IS A SHORT STORY ABOUT A MAN WHO IS A SLEEPWALKER. THE THIRD STORY IS A SHORT STORY ABOUT A MAN WHO IS A SLEEPWALKER.



QUEEN AND
COUNTRY, VOL. 1
BY GREG RUCKA,
TIM SALE AND
STEVE ROLSTON
(ONI PRESS)
PAGE 47
CHARACTER
PANEL 1
JUICY MEN PANTS





SCOTT PILGRIM VOL. 2:
SCOTT PILGRIM VS. THE WORLD
BY BRYAN LEE O'MALLEY
(ONI PRESS)

MAKES SCOTT'S WORLD A MENEFANTS
A LARL ANDRESS
PLAY A ESCO'S A ME







DEATH NOTE

BY TSUGUMI OHBA AND TAKESHI OBATA

(VIZ MED A)

CLUB MONACO SHIRT,

MODERN AMUSEMENT PANTS, TRETORN SNEAKERS





HUNGH!

YEEAGH!

SHIT!



THE WALKING DEAD
BY ROBERT KIRKMAN
AND TONY MOORE
(IMAGE COMICS)
ORIGINAL PENCILLER
AL KEE
LETTERS
SCANS



SPECIAL

**KRISTEN
BELL**
LIFE AFTER
VERONICA
MARS

BY TIM LEONG
PHOTOGRAPH BY FREDERICK M. BROWN



HE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED, QUIRKY PI DRAMEDY VERONICA MARS IS OVER, BUT KRISTEN BELL'S CAREER IS FAR FROM IT. THE SEXY TV STAR IS TAKING ON HOLLYWOOD — AND SHE DOESN'T NEED BACKUP.

Veronica Mars, may she rest in peace. Do you have any final thoughts now that the show is gone?

I'll miss her. I really will. It was really unexpected, I think, but I've always had a lot of confidence in the show from Day 1 and tried to keep an optimistic outlook. I'm sad. A character like that, a group of people like that, writers like that, they don't come along every day. So I'm really sad to see it go.

Are you ready to move on, or are you still dealing?

I'm still looking for closure. With something that special, once you get used to it, as I did for three years, it's not until it's ripped away from you that you truly realize what an amazing experience it was, and then you want it back. It's kind of like high school. Everybody has to graduate obviously I know I can't play Veronica forever — but there's an inevitable sadness. In reading a bunch of stuff now and trying to figure out what my next move is, I've certainly been grateful for how well-written the show was, because stuff like that doesn't come along all the time. And even in the third season, I was still very excited to read each episode as an audience member. It still made me laugh out loud. It never got old. I had a blast making it and that was my family.

It really seemed like the third season catered heavily to the geek crowd.

Was that conscious?

I don't know if I should speak for the writers, if it was a conscious decision. I think that in opening up the college world, they were less about Veronica coming into her own as a young woman and more about her own interactions, which happened to be geeky. Her best friend is a computer genius, and they weren't the "norm" or popular group, so I think they may have been looked at as geeky, but I think for Veronica it was normal.

When you started on *Veronica Mars* you pretty much came out of nowhere. Has the celebrity sunk in for you?

Not really. I'm not recognized very often,

and if I am, it's a die-hard *Veronica Mars* fan. Which is usually flattering and an honor. I really try not to think about it. I don't think you can hold that in your perspective and be a normal person. I'm still looking for my next job, and I still have that feeling in the pit of my stomach that no one is ever going to hire me again. That never goes away. That's something Randy Graff, who is this amazing Tony Award-winning actress, once told me when I was doing a show with her in New York. She said, "It never goes away, that I'm-never-going-to-work-again syndrome." It's not like you hit a certain point as a "celebrity" and think that your shit doesn't stink and that you're on top of the world. I suppose some people do, but it's delusional. It's absolutely delusional. I'm trying to find the next best project, not just a good career move, but something that will make me happy. Something that I'll enjoy the people I'm working with. As lucky that I've been in my career, I'm still a human being. I'd rather take a shitty movie job that I had a lot of fun on, than work on the best movie of the year and be miserable. That's one thing I've learned from working so hard. You gotta stay happy.

**IT WAS SNOWING AND
I WAS WEARING
VIRTUALLY NOTHING.
JUST THOSE TWO LITTLE
METAL PIECES OVER THE
BOOBS — WHICH GET
REALLY COLD BY THE WAY.**



And what factors into that?

I mean, right now I'm doing a romantic comedy. It's kinda a romantic comedy. It's the new Judd Apatow movie called *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, written by Jason Segel, who is in *Knocked Up* and is on *How I Met Your Mother*. I wanted to work with this group of people for a long, long time, and I'm so honored to do so now. I'm really having a blast, and I think if I wasn't having such a great time right now, I'd be a lot more depressed about *Veronica Mars* being canceled. I'm very grateful for this group of people because they're sorta keeping my spirits up. This is a very three-dimensional romantic comedy. I hate even to call it a romantic comedy because it's not clichéd like most of them are. It really shows a breakup from both perspectives and both sides of the story. There's not a single bad guy. At the same time, it's very funny but also very real. So that was obviously what attracted me to the script, and I'm having a great time making it.

Are you looking to focus more on TV or films?

If something fantastic in television comes along, I'll certainly look at it. I think what appeals to me right now is I want to play a lot of different types of characters, and I've got my fingers in a few different pots right now, so possibly movies for the time being, but I'm certainly not opposed to television. I probably wouldn't play the main character on a one-hour drama again, because it's so much work. But as long as I can enjoy it.

Has it been hard transitioning more to film?

The hours are better. I think as far as having opportunities, I've been really, really lucky, and I'm very grateful for what I've been able to be involved in. I'm not going to expect anything because then I think you can be truly grateful for things when you truly don't expect them, but I'm still going to continue to work hard and not just assume that people want to hire me. There are hundreds of thousands of actresses they could decide to hire.

And your next movie, coming out in January, is *Fanboys*. How big of a *Star Wars* fan were you before this?

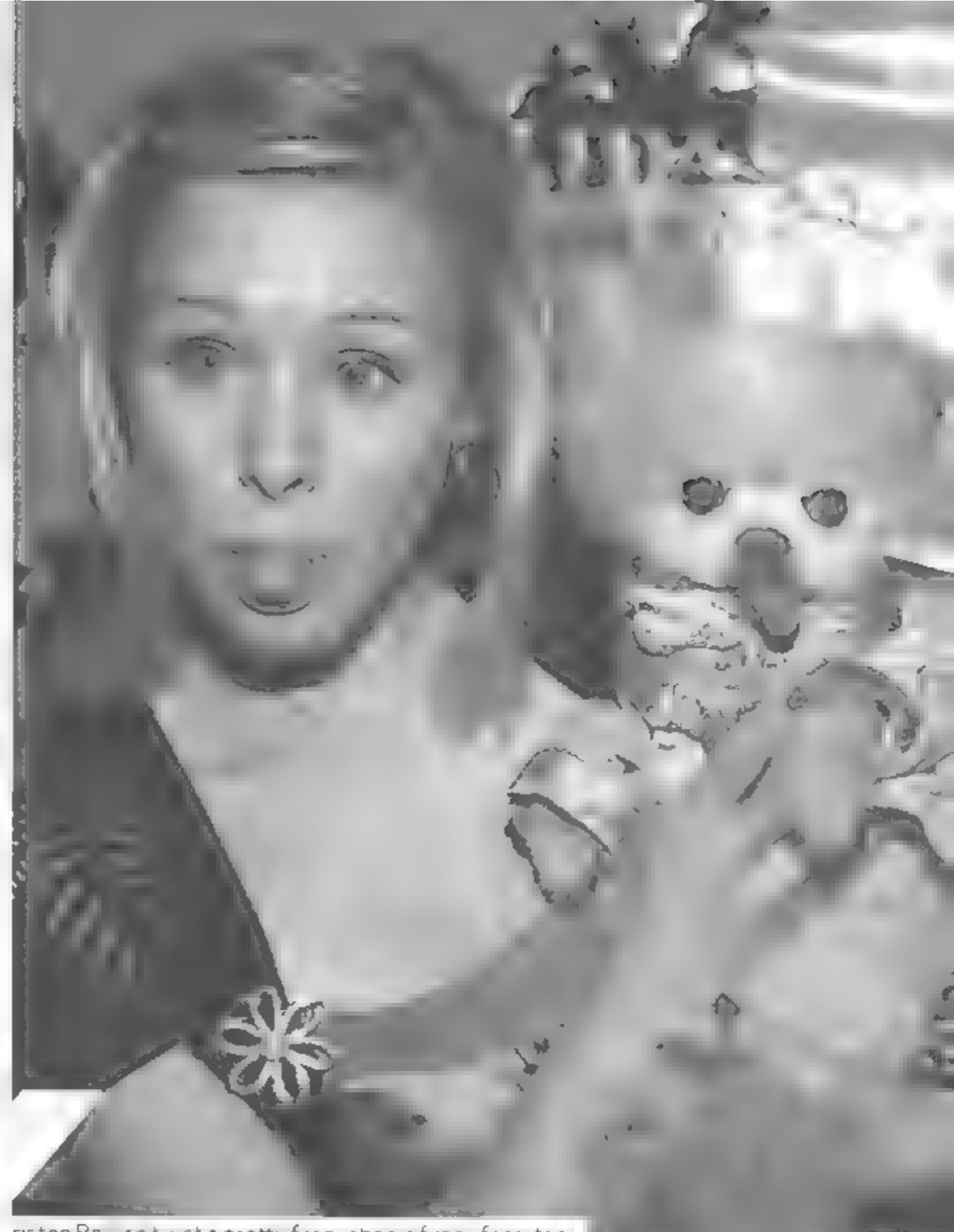
I mean, I liked the movies, but I certainly wasn't as big of a fan as some of the people I've met shooting the movie. I liked it very much, but everyone was so knowledgeable and the boys would always throw in all these crazy references a lot more. I've added "scruffy nerf herder" to my road rage vocabulary.

In *Fanboys* your character is a brunette. As a blonde, was that liberating for you?

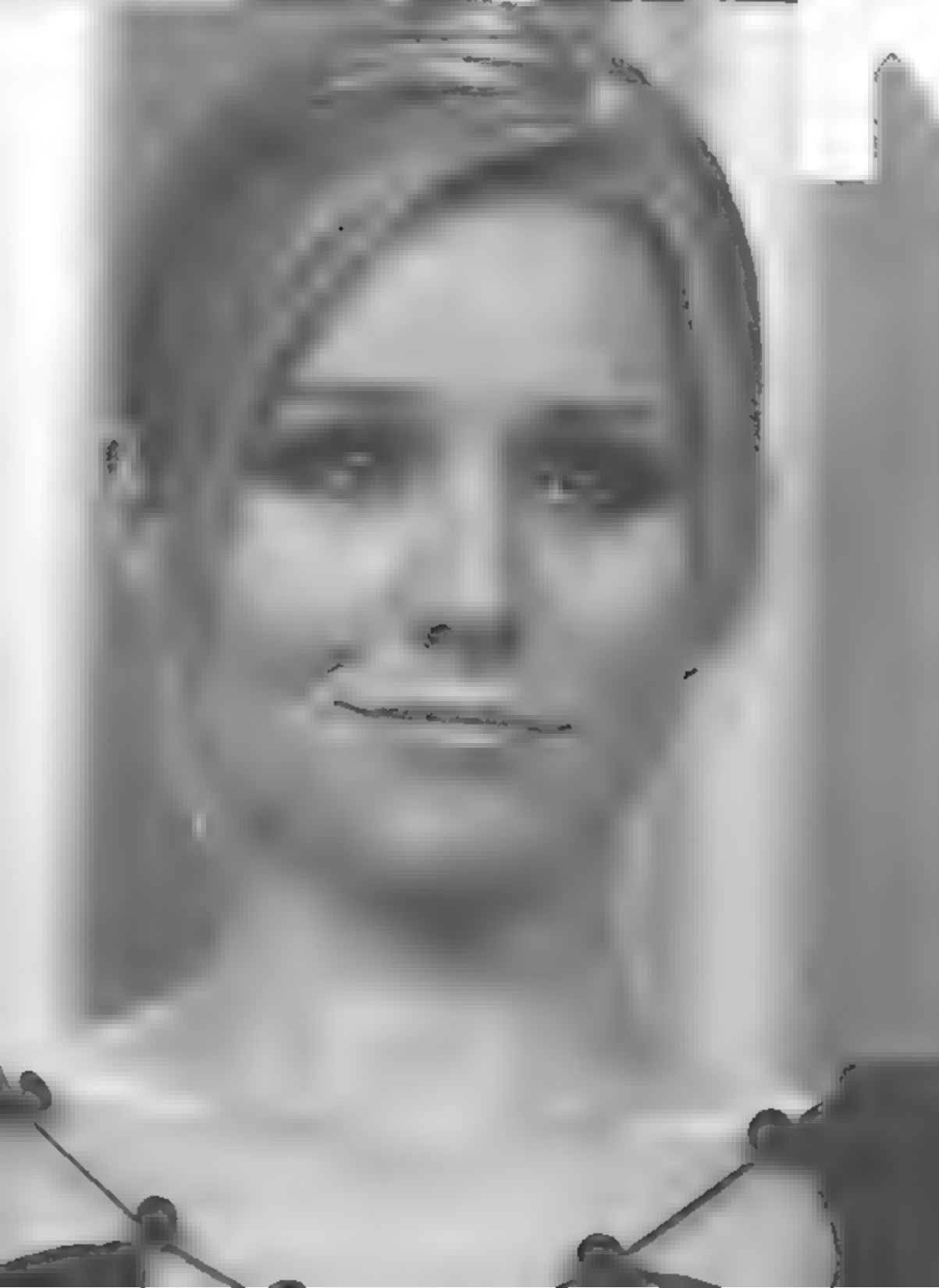
Oh, I fucking loved it.

Are you a typical blonde?

No, because I'm not stupid. I certainly can act the ditz when I need to, and it comes in handy. I'm not going to lie. But I think that's part of what makes me smart, is that I know when to use it and I keep it in my back pocket. I'm a Polish blonde. I defy all stereotypes. I can be ditzy and smart as hell.



Kristen Bell isn't just a pretty face, she's a funny face too.





Did the wig give you a different edge?

It was nice not to be recognized. The cool thing was, when I'd pull on set as a blonde, every single day I was stopped by the security guard. Every single day. Because on set he would only see me as a brunette. It completely changed my look. I liked it. I kinda wanted to be a brunette, but I'd be scared all my hair would fall out.

Yeah, the bald look isn't that popular these days.

Exactly! I'm not too much into the bald look.

I've heard you're in a Princess Leia bikini in the movie.

Hell yes, I am. And let me tell you something. I worked out like the dickens to be in that bikini. I was like, you know what? Fuck it. I'm going to have to wear it, I'm going to try and look good. I ate well, I felt so good about it. I put it on and it started to snow. I kid you not, it was snowing and I was wearing virtually nothing. Just those two little metal pieces over the boobs — which get really cold by the way. And, like, a thong and that little sheet that goes in the front and the back. It was literally snowing. It was so disappointing, because I thought, "I'm going to rock this!" No. I was shivering.

Did you talk to Carrie Fisher when she was on the set?

I did. All the cameos were so great. Billy Dee Williams? I mean, what a stud

Were there any points in the movie where it was like, hold the phone, this is way past nerdy?

Oh, deciding to make the film was way past nerdy. The top of the scale of geekdom? That's where we started. Probably because the director [Kyle Newman] would literally bring his lightsaber to set every day. That's part of the fun of it. I like being different and being unique. I love not caring what other people think. It was also all boys and me, which I guess I'm used to because of *Veronica Mars*. But they took me to a weapons dealer. There was a big fairground in Albuquerque

where they had a bunch of booths set up and the boys wanted to go get weapons because they're boys. We ended up going and everyone ended up buying all these weapons, and I was kinda confused at the beginning. People were buying throwing stars and pen tasers and nunchucks and all this crazy shit. I did buy a pair of nunchucks; I'm not going to lie. We all ended up buying these BB guns that weren't really hard-shooting, but they shoot hard enough to leave a welt. And throughout the course of shooting the movie, we ended up having these BB gun wars in the hotel. And it got so intense, we made a pact we wouldn't shoot at the face, so the actors wore sweatshirts and sunglasses, which made it look even creepier. We're all running around with these bazooka-looking weapons, shooting BB guns. We were running through the hotel lobby, through the kitchen, through the stairways, through the hallways. I was so surprised someone didn't call the police. Once we were doing it in the parking lot and someone actually did call the police and we had to stop.

Is it tough doing comedy? With all these funny actors with *Fanboys* and *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, is it intimidating being around so many comedians when you have to be funny as well?

It's really intimidating. I find myself slipping into audience mode, where I just find myself sitting back and laughing. I'm the first to break in a scene. I'm so bad at keeping my composure and I just end up giggling. I try my best to keep a straight face, but it makes for a really fun day. Simply put as that, you're always laughing on set; you're always happy to come to work.

And talking about *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, how does that even work with Jason Segel, who is, like, 15 feet tall and you're, like, 5-foot?

[laughs] He is the tallest man in the universe, I'll tell you that right now! It actually only adds to the comedy, I think, because Jason is a foot-and-a-half taller than I am. I'm in very high heels for half of the film. So it is kinda funny in and of itself because he's so big and I'm so small. Opposites attract.

Were you able to hold your own? With this movie, and *Fanboys*?

I have no idea. We'll see when they come out. I hope so. I don't really feel like it, but I think that if I do feel like it I would have to call myself on my own bullshit. I would never answer that question and be like, "Oh definitely, I can hold my own." Then I'd just have to slap myself. I'm trying really hard, and I'm enjoying it. I hope I'm adding something useful to the pot.

Are you still auditioning for your roles?

Absolutely. I am not that cool yet. [laughs] I auditioned for *Sarah Marshall*.

Why do you think you got it?

Maybe because I went into the room wanting it so bad. I told them that. I told them I'd work really hard and that I'd be game for what-



CLOCKWISE: Bell and Enrico Colantoni enjoy the holidays in *Mars*, Bell and Jay Baruchel star gaze in *Fanboys*, Bell helps Jason Doherty find his chin on *Mars* and assists Chris Marquette in *Fanboys*.



ever they threw at me because it was a lot of improv, and I think you have to stay on your toes but you also have to be open and be game for whatever comes your way. If you come in thinking you know what you're doing, it backfires. You gotta let the director do what he's doing and just take the ride with him. I just went in, told them how badly I wanted it and tried to stay open.

What's the hardest part about improv for you?

Oh shit, trying to keep up with all these crazy mofos! Russell Brand, who is this European comedian who hasn't really hit America but will shortly take over the world — mark my words — he speaks so fast I can't even catch up sometimes. I mean I really can't. And so is Jason. And acting with the two of them, I'm lucky my character isn't a genius who thinks really fast. Not that she's slow, but I can take them in a little bit more. When the two of them are in a scene together, it's definitely a battle of the wits. I just kinda go in and do it. You can't think about it. That's the whole thing about improv: you can't do anything in advance.

What's with the voice-overs? You're voicing a character in the video game *Assassin's Creed*, you're doing voice-over for the new TV show *Gossip Girl* and you're also doing the main character, Hex, in *Flatland: The Movie*.

I am. And actually one that's not on there, it's a cartoon called *Sheepish* [about a cursed wolf who becomes a sheep] that hasn't come out yet. I really like being in the voice-over booth. I think doing so much voice-over on *Veronica Mars* got me very used to it. And it's easy, having studied music, to be in a VO booth. I like it. They seem to be the jobs that keep coming up.

Are you going to Comic-Con and those conventions?

Of course I am going to Comic-Con. Are you joking?

THREE OF KRISTEN BELL'S FAVORITE THINGS

KARAOKE SONG:

Shit. I'd do a little "Cherish" by Madonna. Or I'd also do "Eternal Flame" by the Bangles, if I really wanted to slow it down and grab people's attention.

ACTING SCENE:

When I got beaten to death on *Deadwood*. That was pretty fucking rad. Because I love hair and makeup prosthetics. They cracked my wig open and put in a trickle of blood so it looks like my skull was showing. And then they put a saggy eye on my eye so it looks like my eye caved in. It was very cool.

CLOTHING ITEM:

I wear boxer briefs. Not every day. But a lot of days.

Do those things intimidate you with all those fans and people?

They do a little bit, but I try to go incognito. I wear my glasses. I think that makes a world of difference. Oh my god, do you want to hear a really funny story?

Indeed!

At this *Star Wars* celebration a couple weeks ago, I was running around trying to get pictures with everybody because there were so many characters there and I wanted to have an album. I felt like a little kid at Disneyland and wanted to get everyone. I got pictures with Darth Vader, I got pictures with this Boba Fett that was dressed like a pimp. He had like a pimp suit on and these

stacked heels and was carrying around a glass of wine. It was really hysterical. And so I went up to a group of storm troopers and I said, "Excuse me, can I take my picture with you?" And he looked at me and he kind goes, "Ehh. Make it quick." I was like, dude, you are the one in head-to-toe costume right now. Don't look at me like I'm the freak because I want to take a picture with you. You came in costume, why wouldn't you want me to take pictures with you?

Well if you really wanted to go incognito, you could always wear that brunette wig.

True. So true.

Do you ever geek out at those conventions?

When we went to that *Star Wars* celebration, I probably stalked this guy dressed up as Captain Jack from *Pirates of the Caribbean* for, like, 45 minutes around the convention center. Because he moves quick, I didn't realize that. I wanted to get a picture with him. I had pictures with all the characters. But that was kinda geeking out because I couldn't keep my focus — I wanted a picture with him so bad. And I don't know why I did. He just put so much effort into it. He was head-to-toe Captain Jack that day.

Head to toe.

Head to toe, it was awesome.

That's funny, because at conventions do you have people who follow you around?

Yes, sometimes, which I find weird, because I'm usually following someone else around.

Have you had any crazy fan encounters?

Some people cry. Which is so strange to me. It's not strange that they'd love something so much. I'm sure I felt that way about god knows what. Probably 90210. But the fact that's it me — it's strange to be the focus of that. I'm not really responsible. I'm acting Veronica, but Veronica wasn't my idea. It's strange that the actors tend to get credit for everything when there are so many other people involved that make a great show or a great production. And I think it's the duty of the actor to be gracious and say thank you to everybody.

What about the bad parts about this business?

Of course. Around every corner there's something bad or gross or evil. I think just keeping your head screwed on straight you can look past all the bullshit. There's a lot of bullshit. People bullshit you left and right. I think the worst part is that I can get really work-obsessed. And I need to remember to slow down and enjoy life a little bit. I don't think I'm really susceptible to the stereotype of the young-actress-party-girl because it's just not me. It never has been, and I don't think it will be. I don't really drink. I rarely, rarely drink. I don't like going out because clubs are kinda stinky, and I don't like other people sweating on me. I'm doing my best to stay as normal as possible. ☺



Tina Majorino, Bell and Chris Lowell on *Mars*.

MANI

OF

LA

MANGA

BY
DANIELLE
MCCLURE

in Myōrenji

黄線
寺馬
TÔ YOKO-SEN
MYORENJI

カ7C
CAF

NEVER HEARD OF FREDERIC BOILET?

Trust us, you're not alone. The 47-year-old French mangaka is kind of a big deal, even if he does fly under the radar of many American graphic novel enthusiasts. Boilet is no Frank Miller, nor does his style echo that of manga king, Osamu Tezuka. But, that's precisely what makes Boilet's work so fascinating. His mature, literary take on traditional Japanese manga is so unlike anything else that it inspired an entirely new genre of comic art known as *nouvelle manga*.

Boilet's most recent autobiographical work, *l'Épinard de Yukiko*, or *Yukiko's Spinach*, which was first published in France and Japan by Ego Comme X and Ohta Shuppan, respectively, chronicles a French artist who courts a young woman from Tokyo. It has become the ultimate visual aid for this alternative artistic style, which, like metal's response to punk, was a movement born out of artists' need to diverge from the over-the-top, commercial norm flooding the market.

In other words, *nouvelle manga* rebels against the superhero and sci-fi-themed comics most typically associated with the 1980s by melding the traditional characteristics of *bande dessinée* (French graphic novels) with those of Japanese manga to create an entirely new art form. And it has gained considerable mainstream popularity since its emergence in the 1990s. In fact, in 1999, Boilet's version of *bande dessinée* was so distinctive that editor and critic Kiyoshi Kusumi of the popular Japanese art magazine *Bijutsu Techô* was compelled to coin the term *nouvelle manga* to exclusively describe the artist's work.

So what exactly makes Boilet's body of work so authentic? In a broader sense, it combines the ideals of both French and Japanese comic art, typically within a 46-page serial formula. Boilet expresses the day-to-day narrative of contemporary life, which is common in Japanese manga, but diverges when it comes to the artistry. Instead of using exaggerated stereotypes for his characters (also a manga characteristic), Boilet takes cues from BD by focusing on more intimate, humanistic renderings of his subjects to capture the unfiltered realism of specific body movements and facial expressions, such as the lines in a crinkled nose or the curvature of a naked torso.

In *Yukiko's Spinach* in particular, Boilet takes great care to distinguish each panel of the book. It draws undeniable parallels to the cinematic expressiveness of French film as if viewed through a director's lens. It's fascinating, beautiful and stunningly candid. One panel might feature a close-up of an eye or a street sign as opposed to the common sweeping scene. Boilet also tinkers with various media — even photography, video and crayons — all within a subtle monochromatic palette. Like American writer and director Woody Allen, Boilet even includes himself as a character in many of his stories and openly reveals his own creative process. The result is unguarded, playful artistry that's as intimate, seductive and — dare we say, as voyeuristic — as uncovering a stranger's cherished journal entries, doodles or even forgotten love letters.

Boilet's career as an illustrator and writer has a fairly significant

timeline. The art school graduate married his Japanese muse, Kaoru Sekizumi, before moving to Tokyo in 1997, where he joined writer and longtime collaborator Benoît Peeters (who he also teamed up with for his heralded *Love Hotel*) and Japanese manga artist Jirô Taniguchi to create *Tokyo Is My Garden*, that same year. The book's innovation and acclaim firmly cemented Boilet's cult manga status in both France and Japan.

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Boilet has, become a sort of *nouvelle manga* spokesman, and even wrote a manifesto of the subject on his website (boilet.net). The artist has formed his own interpretations of *nouvelle manga* characteristics, noting that even

grammatically, the French name sets it apart from other comic art forms. The name uses the feminine form "nouvelle," meaning "new," rather than the masculine "nouveau." In France particularly, the masculine form has already been deemed an abbreviation for "cheap" or violent teen comics. Thus, "la" (the feminine) *nouvelle manga* avoids stereotypes altogether and allows readers to create their own assumptions about the work without preconceived notions.

Boilet has made an indelible mark on the manga scene with his cross-cultural sensibilities and truly breathtaking style worthy of any modern art gallery. The refreshing sincerity, realism and cinematic depth far exceed expectations. Boilet himself said that by combining the ideals of the two distinctive characteristics of BD and manga, *nouvelle manga* does not discriminate against its readers, and it really is the best of both worlds. **CF**



Sex and the Super- hero

Peeking under the
cap es of our
favorite fantasies

By Laura Hudson



A gorgeous warrior woman ties men up in her lasso and forces them to obey her will. A mousy lawyer lets her hair down and becomes a larger-than-life bombshell who throws inhibition to the wind. And a man who's ignored by the woman he loves decides to take off his glasses and prove he's everything she ever wanted. The fantasies are primal, powerful and fundamentally erotic; they're also the subtext of some of the most famous superhero stories in comic book history.

As children, superheroes come to us as the costumes of adulthood — the early, often physical fantasies of what it means to be a man or a woman. Comics have always allowed readers to escape reality and all its limitations, and for adolescents who suddenly find their bodies confusing, even frightening, the images of men and women who escape, transform or exult in their forms is particularly potent.

"The superhero comic was always about the body," wrote Gerard Jones in *Men Of Tomorrow*, his origin story of the comic book industry. "The body in duress and supple joy, the body stripped down and made pure, the body glorified and also pushed to a place unreal and unthreatening." Like the pubescent onset of incredible powers that is so common in comics, the dawn of sexual desire is sometimes

ecstatic, sometimes frightening, but always transformative.

For Jerry Siegel, the co-creator of Superman, the transformation was also an awkward one, defined largely by his inability to approach the opposite sex. "I had crushes on several attractive girls who either didn't know I existed or didn't care I existed," Siegel said in a 1983 interview.

He found both solace and inspiration in the August 1928 cover of the pulp magazine *Amazing Stories*, an image that featured a red-costumed man in an incredible flying suit, who soars across the page while turning his head back toward a pretty girl nearby, who ignores the man beside her to wave her handkerchief at the hovering hero. It was a heady combination of technology and sexual allure that would ignite the imaginations of a generation of bookish young

boys, including Siegel and Joe Shuster, the future co-creators of the Man of Steel.

"Joe and I had certain inhibitions ... which led to wish-fulfillment which we expressed through our interest in science fiction and our comic strip," Siegel said. "That's where the dual-identity concept came from, and Clark Kent's problems with Lois. I imagine there are a lot of people in this world who are similarly frustrated."

Siegel began to fantasize about ways he could get noticed, in the hyperbolic terms of sexual machismo as filtered through superheroes. "What if I had something special going for me, like jumping over buildings or throwing cars around?" he wondered. "Then maybe they would notice me."

The hero he created was an invincible Übermensch who could do all those things and

more, but one who also walked the world in a guise so mild-mannered that no one ever suspected his true power. In one Golden Age story, when Lois Lane double-crosses Clark Kent in order to scoop him on a story, Superman (of course) ends up saving her from a breaking dam, earning him kisses and declarations of love.

Later, when Clark tries to forgive Lois' deception, her response is cruelly dismissive. "Who cares! (The spineless worm! I can barely stand looking at him, after having been in the arms of a real he man—)" Little did she know, the subtext goes, that the man she disdained was secretly the one she desired most.

But if Superman represented the male desire for personal power and sexual magnetism, however secret, Wonder Woman was born out of the desire to cede power to another, a desire that was no less bound up in sex. Her creator, psychologist William Marston, believed strongly in the superiority of woman, and he thought violence and hatred would never end until women conquered men through sexuality.

The heroine he crafted: an Amazonian princess with a magical lasso that could force any man she caught with it to tell the truth — or, in its initial incarnation, to obey her every command. Marston called Wonder Woman "the new type of woman that I believe should rule the world," a character designed to appeal to "the subconscious, elaborately disguised desire of males to be mastered by a woman ... Give them an alluring woman stronger than themselves to submit to, and they'll be proud to become her willing slaves!"

It was a desire he not only shared but also advocated, believing as he did that this sexual fantasy could save the world. According to Marston, comics were an ideal form of propaganda for these ideas, because they appealed to readers on a very personal level of fantasy. "By their comics tastes, ye shall know them," he said in a 1942 *Family Circle* article. "Tell me anybody's preference in story strips, and I'll tell you his subconscious desires."

"Desire's a strange land one discovers as a child, where nothing makes the slightest sense," says Alice of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in *Lost Girls*, a three-volume graphic-novel-cum-



hardcore-pornography by Alan Moore and Melinda Gebbie that explores the stories of beloved female figures — Lewis Carroll's Alice, Wendy from J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, and Dorothy from L. Frank Baum's *Wizard of Oz*

as elaborate metaphors for sexual awakening.

The three characters encounter each other in a European hotel as the world stands on the verge of World War I, and they discover a common thread among their childhoods: a moment in which everything suddenly changed, and each was thrust into bizarre, incredible places where nothing seemed real. "Sex was this whole different world," says Dorothy, who emerged from the literal and figurative tornado of her sexual awakening with the feeling that she had been "picked up and twisted around, then put down in some place else entirely."

Wendy imagines her first sexual experience as flight, a common form of wish-fulfillment in both superhero books and Freudian psychoanalysis, in which dreams of flying are almost always interpreted as dreams of sexual excitement. "In my dreams [Peter] took all of us with him, out over London, up into the sky like a wish," Wendy says. "And that's how both my real adventures and my dream adventures began: with a vision of flying." Just as it did for Jerry Siegel.

Dreams and desires change, of course, and the ones we have as children, when the world of adulthood and sexuality are as alien and strange as any comic book universe, are not the same desires we have as adults.

Although society is mostly permissive of childish fantasy, it remains painfully restrictive of adult fantasy, as though the dream of sex were somehow dirtier than any other dream. Perhaps that might explain why, as the comic book audience has grown older and comic books have shifted to more "mature" sexual content, that the audience's attitude toward sex has remained juvenile.

The entry for "comic book" in a 1960s *Illustrated World Encyclopedia* is an almost hilarious exercise in fun-hating and claims comics can do a lot of harm and complained that "There is nothing real about the stories in comic books, and for that reason, grownups are often against them and children love them, but chil-

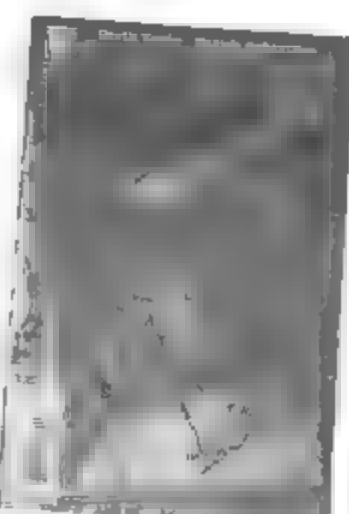
WHAT YOUR COMICS SAY ABOUT YOU

Clinical sexologist and *New York Times* best-selling author Dr. Ian Kerner weighs in on the sexual fantasies at play in today's comic books, and what they might mean for the people who read them.



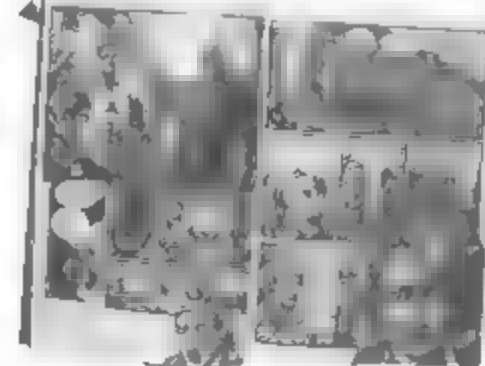
All-Star Batman & Robin the Boy Wonder #6 (DC Comics)

Kerner: This is the sort of pap that really dominates the mainstream, and it seems very cliché to me on many levels. It's a very puerile male adolescent fantasy. It's the clichéd myth of the woman who protests but really wants. When a woman says no, she really means yes. It's projecting the wrong message about female sexuality, particularly if young people are going to read this. It's objectifying women, and it's demeaning.



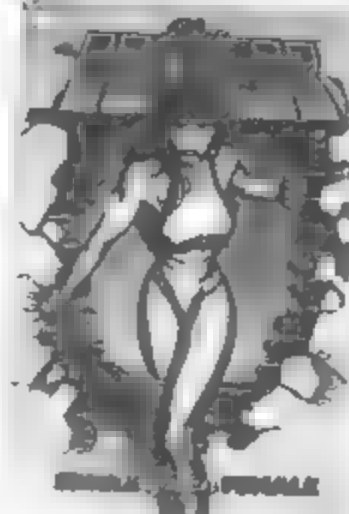
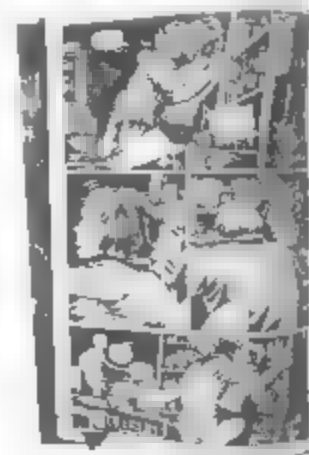
The Boys #3 (Dynamite Entertainment)

Kerner: It seems to be exploring the idea of domination, basically, and submission. Starlight is being dominated, plain and simple. It seems like it would appeal to a man's fantasy for domination — rape fantasies are very prevalent. The thing that gets so tricky about it is that women also have rape fantasies as well, and when it comes to fantasy, you have to give yourself permission to explore things in your mind or to role-play something that might not be culturally sanctioned. And while I would never try to be the thought police and censor what any woman is thinking or desiring, this clearly isn't really being written for women to indulge in, either.



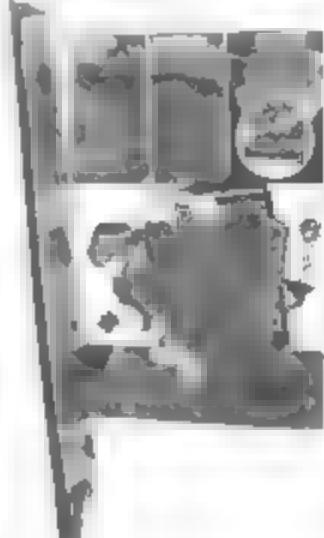
Local #8 (Oni Press)

Kerner: The cultural stereotype is that men are the only ones who like to have novelty in their sex life, or quickies in the backrooms of stores, but women fantasize about all that and more. Women have a much richer fantasy life, in many ways, than men. Women fantasize more during sex than men do, women are more likely to fantasize during sex about someone other than the person they're having sex with. I think women could pick this up, and much as *The Boys* would probably appeal to guys who are into superheroes, this is the kind of comic book that would appeal to women.



She-Hulk TPB #1 (Marvel Comics)

Kerner: In some ways She-Hulk strikes me as a metaphor for the performance that many women have to undertake during sex, from faking orgasm to making love like a porn star. I could look at that as a comment on the fact that many women feel like they can't really be themselves in bed... Many young women wrestle with the whole slut/good girl dichotomy, you're one or the other, and it's very hard to reconcile. You could also make a case that in every good-girl lawyer, there's a bad She-Hulk who wants to come out.



dren love them.... Children were reading in them about things that do not exist, and they were being made to believe things that were wrong."

That isn't true, of course; comics have always spoken to the adult longings of adolescents, much as they have spoken to the "inner children" of many adults. Regardless, superhero comics haven't been aimed at children for quite some time now. The vast majority of comic book readers are

now well out of their childhoods, and consequently the fantasies that superheroes cater to are often not for children anymore. But if the metaphor of superheroes is powerful because it speaks to the possibilities and fears of adolescence, what does it mean to us after we have grown up?

There are few subjects as compelling as sex, or as complicated, particularly in a culture so simultaneously profligate and

puritanical that it could almost be called schizophrenic. It is easier, when divided by desire, to approach sex through metaphor and characters familiar enough to hold up a mirror to our hearts but fantastic enough to let us pretend, in all our childish denial, that we don't see ourselves.

The reality is that the comics we read as children will never speak to us exactly the same way they did then, and that while we can try to filter our childhood

Heroes for Hire #13 (Marvel Comics)

Kerner: On one level, it's completely objectifying, it seems consistent with a tradition of objectification and adolescent male fantasy. On the other hand ... there are plenty of women who fantasize about being tied up, about being raped, about being bound, and it's a perfectly healthy expression of their imaginations and their fantasies. When it comes to sexual fantasy and the unconscious, it's a much more primordial space where the usual rules don't necessarily apply.

I can tell you that the top four fantasies I come across, regardless of gender are exhibitionism, voyeurism, domination, and submission. When I see the comic book cover that's causing all this stir, it really treads on sort of all four of those poles. Clearly the women are being dominated, so the male viewer, I assume, and the male spectator is sort of the dominator. There's also an element of voyeurism, for who ever is looking in on this scene, and there might well be a level of exhibitionism, from the perspective of the women in the comics. So it plays on all four, which are very, very human archetypes as they relate to fantasy. So in and of itself I would not say that that



fantasy or those types of images are necessarily unhealthy. I guess the bigger question is: What is the cultural impact of those images, ultimately, on the men who consume them and the way they treat women? This is a much, much bigger conversation. You could ask the same thing about pornography: Is it healthy or unhealthy? Does it reaffirm the objectification of women? Does it make it difficult for men to interact with real women? Those are very legitimate questions, but I don't think there's a clear answer. I don't believe that any fantasy is particularly unhealthy unless it harms somebody. It's only when people

become ashamed and cut themselves off from their fantasies that they start to become sexually unhealthy. So for someone who's looking at that comic book cover if that engages his or her sense of fantasy, it could become the starting point for a conversation. A guy and his girlfriend who could ask each other, "Is that something you fantasize about? Does that turn you on?" That can be a very healthy conversation.

To me, comic books are, by dint of their heightened reality, operating in the realm of fantasy to begin with. So I'd probably have to say [that cover] is less unhealthy than critics would like to say

ity that our superheroes were really hinting at all those years.

"It was like something in me waking up," says the formerly prudish Wendy, after Alice seduces her and forces her to face the childhood memories of desire, which she had always kept buried, and realize them as an adult. If flying is the dream, then sex is consciousness, and the *Lost Girls* is a reverie that wants to wake us and teach us to dream as adults the way superheroes did as children — by letting us put on the costume of fantasy and setting us free.

Fetishism and fantasy have always smoldered beneath the skin of the superhero mythos, where true virility is so often hidden in phone booths, capes and cowls. Although comics have a rather poor track record of sexual maturity — as a summer *Heroes for Hire* cover that implied bondage and tentacle rape illustrated in painful, oozing detail — superhero comics are perfectly capable of being better, and from time to time, they are.

In the Alan Moore classic *Watchmen*, Silk Spectre and Nite Owl, two retired superheroes, find themselves returning to their costumes once more not just as a heroic gesture, but also as a sexual aid. Unable to consummate their relationship as civilians, the fantasy of superheroes comes back to them as a nothing less than a sexual revelation, and it is only after they put on their costumes that they are finally ready to strip them off.

"Was tonight good?" asks Silk Spectre. "Did the costumes make it good?" she asks again. "Yeah. Yeah, I guess the costumes had something to do with it. It just feels strange, you know?" says Nite Owl. "To come out and admit that to somebody. To come out of the closet."

The magic of the costume is not that it conceals the hero but that it exposes his true self by disguising his common one. In both sex and comics, costumes allow people to reveal some part of themselves, to allow some part of their personalities they normally keep hidden to come out and play. This is the great power fantasy of superhero comics, the wish-fulfillment dream that resonates so deeply with its readers: People who seem ordinary or even pathetic can secretly hold a shining secret inside them, and they are stronger, braver and more po-

tent than anyone would suspect.

In the Dan Slott trade, *Single Green Female*, She-Hulk beds a famous male model on *People* magazine's Top Ten Sexiest Men list, and she wakes up next to him in the morning not as an invulnerable, supremely confident superheroine, but as her mousy and decidedly unsuper alter ego Jennifer Walters. Stuck beneath a muscled arm she is now too weak to lift, Walters winces with insecurity, looking for an escape. "Got to do something before it happens," she thinks. "Before he gives me the look. The 'I-went-home-with-She-Hulk-but-woke-up-to-this' look."

When her law firm insists that she stay in human form, Walters chafes against the restriction, calling her human form a "discarded shell" and "a lie." "When I'm like this ... I'm a waif. I'm vulnerable. A target!" she protests. As a human, her femininity means frailty and makes her a potential victim; as She-Hulk, her femininity is part of her confidence, power, and glorious, unapologetic sexuality.

"The moment I became She-Hulk, I became something better!" she shouts. "I know who I really am inside," she says at the end of a long day at the office, transforming back into She-Hulk and leaning back against a tree with a sigh of satisfaction, her office clothes spooled around her in shreds.

Everyone longs, sometimes, for the freedom to be someone different, for masks not to conceal us, but to transform us. We enter the phone booths of our fantasies to dream of being the people we desire: for the child to become an adult, for the weak to become strong, for the repressed to become liberated. Our fantasies open us to possibilities that excite us precisely because they are unbound from reality, and whether they're sexual or wish-fulfilling in nature, the principle is the same. Fantasies allow us to escape our own lives, our own limitations, and go places we only dream of going.

"Like shoes, we try our fantasies on, yes?" says the hotel manager in *Lost Girls*. "Sometimes they are too big for us, sometimes we outgrow them; they become too small, too confining. Or perhaps they wear out, become dull, familiar, comfortable. But always, our shoes, our fantasies, they take us somewhere new." ☺

heroes and their erotic subtext through our adult desires, the result is often like Peter Pan on Viagra: a shocking, dissonant spectacle that amps up the sex to adult levels but leaves the level of maturity set to "juvenile."

While comics have become more "mature" with sexual content, their attitude toward sex is anything but. Rather than dealing with sex honestly or directly, most comics titillate readers by posing anatomically

distorted characters in suggestive poses, a nonstop parade of hypersexualized Barbie dolls pressed together, panel after panel, in compromising positions.

An alternative viewpoint, which *Lost Girls* explores in a manner more explicit than any mainstream comic would, is that we look our comic book fantasies squarely in the eye and ask them to be more than adolescent wet dreams on infinite loop, allowing them to speak to the adult sexual-



SCOTT PILGRIM

Cartoonist
Bryan Lee O'Malley
prepares for
the fourth volume
of his hit series,
Scott Pilgrim

BY TIM LEONG





THERE ARE MANY SIMILARITIES BETWEEN **BRYAN LEE O'MALLEY** AND HIS STAR CHARACTER, SCOTT PILGRIM. SURE, THERE ARE THE OBVIOUS ONES: BOTH ARE CANADIAN, BOTH ARE MUSICIANS AND BOTH REPRESENT THE INDIE COOL GENERATION. BUT THEY'RE ALSO BOTH EVOLVING. WITH THE FOURTH BOOK IN THE SERIES, **SCOTT PILGRIM GETS IT TOGETHER**, O'MALLEY IS CHANGING HIS CREATIVE APPROACH, AND THE BOOK IS CHANGING WITH IT.

Are these interviews the worst part of the job?
No, I don't mind it. It breaks up the day. I haven't done that many this year since I haven't had anything out yet. I'm getting used to it.

So the book got optioned a while back — what's the word on that?
They wrote a draft last year and are supposed to write a second draft over the summer. There's no casting, no official greenlight or anything.

Well, I know they wanted you to plot out the rest of the series so they could write the screenplay. Does that add more pressure for you to finish?
Yeah, actually, it kinda does. I can't be like, "I could just quit, and say, 'I could just leave this book tomorrow and do something else.'" But I think the movie is part of that. I wouldn't want to abandon it because I know whatever happens, the movie will end up being kinda different from my vision of the end of the comic. So I'd like to get my version out there too, especially if the movie does get made. Especially if the movie turns out to be kinda weird or whatever, and people are like, "I don't like that, I don't think I'm going to read the rest of the comics." Well, you know, hopefully everything will be OK and everyone will still be reading.

Is there also more pressure to finish the book series before the movie comes out?
No, I mean, I'd like to get as much done as possible before that happens, if it does happen. The movie process can go faster. If they say they're fast-tracking it and mean it and actually do things fast in movie world — in comics, I can't really speed up any more than I possibly can.

Plot-wise, would the movie spoil what would happen in the book?
I know some people that have expressed that concern to me. It's like the broad outline of what they can do. Then they put their own spin on it. That's what I think they should do in an adaptation anyway.

When you started getting money for the movie, what was the biggest thing you bought?
We got the first check in 2005, and we were waiting all year. Because we signed it in May and didn't get the money until September. We were waiting to buy a house.

I'm seeing a lot of celebrities saying they love *Scott Pilgrim*.

Yeah, I think the movie is definitely a factor. I think it's kinda going around Hollywood right now and people are reading it and trying to get in on it. I think that's why recognizable people are talking about it.

Have you had any bizarre celebrity encounters through that?

When I went to San Diego last year I went to a couple weird Hollywood schmooze parties because I got dragged along by my publisher. It was a bit weird. I met the guy who directed *Donnie Darko* for like one second. I never know what to say in those situations.

Did you think this series would blow up like this?

No. It was never intentional. Basically when I was working on my first book, *Lost at Sea*, it was really insular. And at the time I was working on that book I made a bunch of new friends, and when the book came out they were really underwhelmed by it because it really wasn't the me that they knew. It was really heavy in my angsty adolescence. So I wanted to do something they'd appreciate. That was really my only goal. I was friends with Chris Butcher, who was managing a comic store at the time, and he helped with the format to make it more appealing. So I guess that paid off.

Do you read a lot of responses online?

I say I try not to do it, but I don't actually try not to. I read everything. I'm one of those obsessively Googling-yourself people.

It's weird because you don't see too many negative responses.

No, you don't. That's the thing. There's like one out of 1,000. Even the negative ones don't even bother me that much. Most of the time they're just like, "I didn't care for it that much." Which is fine. It's bad in the sense that I'm obsessed with it and keep trying to stop, but not really.

When the last book came out, I had in my RSS a blog search through Google that continually updates whenever anyone says anything about you, which is just a bad idea.

When you're working on the book do you go start to finish, or do you just jump around?

It's been different each time, but I'm finding that the most linear fashion as possible is the best way.

I FOUND MYSELF DRAWING THREE PANELS TO A PAGE, THEN GOING BACK AND ERASING THE FIRST TWO.

Why is that?

Just because of continuity from panel to panel. I found myself drawing three panels to a page, then going back and erasing the first two. In general, I write a full script, and I did a couple passes on it this time and tried to make it as tight as possible and let people read it and give feedback. On *Scott Pilgrim & the Infinite Sadness* I was a little scattered and all over the place and it kinda suffered because of it. I want it to be tighter from top to bottom.

Besides that, are you doing anything differently with Vol. 4 than you have with the rest?

It's taking so much longer. It's the hardest one so far, definitely.

How come?

There's just so many things, it's hard to pick one. I did change my paper size for drawing. I went up by 3 inches, which doesn't seem like much, but I think it's helping out with the art a lot. It probably does take a little longer, and it's more to wrap your head around.

How is it helping the art?

I was starting to feel kinda constrained by it. I was drawing really small. The first three books I drew on 7-by-11, which is sub-computer-paper size. It's printed at digest size, so it's OK to be small. But I went up to 9-by-14 this time, which is a lot bigger. It doesn't seem it, but it is. It helps when reducing the art and the errors are less visible. The lines are a lot cleaner.

Would you say drawing is the hardest part about producing the book?

I wish I could just do the script and do a revise and be done. Or even just do the thumbnails and be done. But there are so many steps that it just takes so long.

There's definitely an evolution in your art from Vol. 1 to 3 — it's a lot crisper now. Do you think it takes longer to achieve that?

On the first three I don't think I was really putting much more time in. The first one was rushed. Like, actually rushed. I did 100 pages in a month or something. Drawing better doesn't necessarily take more time. I just kinda got better, I think. But drawing bigger takes a little more time, and I guess the thing that takes more time is that when you have more space, you can fit more details in. So you can put in more background material and stuff like that. You have to try and find the balance, and I'm still trying to do that.



Do you think you've gotten better as an artist in general, or better at drawing *Scott Pilgrim*? Oh, definitely as an artist in general. I've done, like, 600 pages or something of *Scott Pilgrim*, and it's not like I'm just drawing Scott Pilgrim again and again. I am doing buildings and trees and cars and things like that. And also with panels and storytelling and that kind of thing. I think I've definitely improved and am at a decent place now.

Is that a worry for you at all? That your mind will be stuck in *Scott Pilgrim* when you move on to other projects?

I don't think so. It is evolving. It's not like I'm drawing the same episodic story over and over again — it's not like I'm drawing *Garfield*. It evolves, and I think I'm allowing it to evolve with me as I get older and my interests change. Not so much that it'd be alien to whoever read the first volume or anything. I definitely wanted to play it from the beginning to be a learning process and growing process.

What do you think is the most important thing you've learned in that process?

THERE'S NO COMICS MASTER TO APPRENTICE TO, SO I HAVE TO LEARN EVERYTHING.

It's such a whole package, the whole comic. I've become a better writer and I've figured out how to lay out my pages in an unconfusing way. It's just all around. It's kinda like my apprenticeship. There's no comics master to apprentice to, so I have to learn everything.

Now why is that? Is that because you're more of a hybrid style?

I didn't want to draw *X-Men* or anything, so I don't really have a role model. So I'm kinda doing my own thing and learning from old Japanese comics.

Are there any Japanese comicsc in particular you look up to for that?

There are no specific ones. I just try and learn through osmosis, I guess. I like (Osamu)

Tezuka. In the past year I've been reading a lot of his stuff. I tend to get Japanese books and not actually read the words, just look at the panels.

Were there any new pop culture influences when you were working on the new book?

I know when I was writing the script I was influenced a lot by Edgar Wright, who was helping the *Scott Pilgrim* movie. So we were talking a lot during the making of the third one. So for the fourth one I was definitely watching *Shaun of the Dead* a lot. Just because his stuff is very structured, and I liked that it was very tight. I'm sure there's other stuff. So much stuff goes in because it's such a long process. Everything that I do and see and take in kinda gets filtered in. So it's hard to remember because I'm still in the middle of it.

Is your wife, Hope Larson, involved in the process at all?

Well, she read my script and little things here and there, but nothing major. We work back to back, her desk is right behind mine. We chat and listen to the same music, but we don't really work together.



Do you get a lot of feedback from her?

I don't really show her pages as I go. I don't ask for her criticism on every little thing. Now and then I'll show her a sequence and ask if it makes any sense.

You mentioned your drawing has evolved. Has your grey tone coloring evolved at all?

Yeah, I've still been trying to figure it out. It was definitely different from what it was in the third volume. The third one I tried something completely different. It was a lot heavier in terms of the shading. But with the fourth one I'm trying to pare it down a little bit. It's the kind of thing you can't tell how you're doing until the book is in print, which is very tricky. Fortunately I have a laser printer now, which helps me gauge it. It's still really difficult to tell until you flip through the whole thing.

Is that because of the pacing or something like the tactile experience of flipping through?

Yeah, like the ink and the paper and feel. Pretty much the whole thing. It's really hard to get a sense of what you're doing until it's all in book form. Not entirely, but there's that little bit you can't feel until it's in a tangible form.

How do you worry about pacing?

Because you're not doing a 22-page comic, it's a 200-page graphic novel.

I think about in that, how many pages can I do in this book before I go completely insane? I want to really pad out certain sections and do the whole [Brian] Bendis thing. Have the important moments happen over more panels or more page space. Which is done in manga all the time. But then do I cram in all the other stuff in as many panels per page as possible? Sometimes. It's a tricky balance issue. In terms of page count, I could've probably have gone as high as I wanted, but I'm trying to keep it around the 200 page mark because I feel like more than that will burn you out. I am kinda cramming in certain scenes with a lot of panels per page and then other scenes happen really slowly.

Is it very tiring working on the book physically? How many hours per day are you in front of the boards?

Never enough. It's tiring when I get really going. I haven't really been doing much the last couple of weeks because I've been out of it. Then my hand starts to go. My wrist — I kinda messed it up when I was doing *Lost at Sea*, and when I really get going I have to put ice on it.

That's been hampering you the whole time?

Pretty much. But it doesn't really stop me. It's only when I'm doing my maximum output and doing six pages a day. And that's when my hand will hurt.

Do you have a favorite of the four books?

We'll see after this one comes out. I think the third one was my least favorite.

Why is that?

I didn't do enough of a script, and I feel like I didn't get enough time to edit afterwards.



IN HIGH SCHOOL I WAS DEFINITELY THE SNOTTY KID WHO THOUGHT HE WAS PERFECT ON THE FIRST TRY. I'M JUST LEARNING THAT THAT'S NOT THE CASE.

Plus, I think it was the latest of the whole series, so I was really sad the whole time I was doing it.

How did you adjust that for the new book?

I definitely put a lot more effort into the script this time. The first two had scripts but they were pretty basic. This one, I thought a lot more about the structure of it, about what goes in and the themes. Then I actually did multiple drafts, which was the first time I'd ever done that. I feel like it's a lot stronger for it. And I'm still editing as I draw, and adding

other stuff in. But I think it was really important to have a good base to start from.

Was it harder to do multiple drafts?

It was actually very liberating. In high school I was definitely the snotty kid who thought he was perfect on the first try. I'm just learning that that's not the case.

Now how involved is Oni Press in the process?

Uh ... not at all, practically. I send them scripts to read and different drafts. They're sort of a support team for me. I don't really get any direct editorial from them unless I ask for it. They're my publishers, they're my friends.

Do you ever ask for it?

Yeah, like with drafts of the script and everything. I didn't used to ask for it and when they did I would yell at them. And I think they kind of feel like I'd be that way, but I've mellowed out in my old age for sure. ☺



HEROINE ADDICT

FROM BUFFY TO CLAIRE:
RATING THE MODERN
SUPERGIRLS THAT HAVE
US HOOKED

IT IS A TRUISM, in horror films, that if a cute blond girl goes walking down a dark alley, then a terrible fate is about to befall her. Dark alleys are, of course, full of monsters, and in a horror movie, the cute blond girl usually doesn't stand a chance. "I felt bad for her," said writer Joss Whedon in a 2000 *Rolling Stone* interview, about the poor girl who was always meeting her untimely demise. "She was always more interesting to me than the other women. She was fun, she had sex, she was vivacious. But then she would get punished for it."

And then Whedon had a vision, one that suddenly played in his mind like a movie trailer. What if the girl went down the dark alley, he thought, and the monster followed her, and then ... she destroyed him? Whedon knows the answer to that now, of course, and her name is Buffy. And from 1997 to 2003, her television show, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, upended the horror genre by giving viewers a girl that they could cheer for rather than fear for. Rather than shouting, "Don't go in there!" when the female lead turned down the dark alley, you worried for the monster.

BY LAURA HUDSON
PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM LEONG





Buffy was only 16 years old when she was chosen to become the Slayer, next in an ancient line of superpowered girls charged with defending the world from vampires, demons, and the occasional apocalypse. In an episode titled "Weight of the World," a young man Buffy saves from a monster attack seems shocked. "But you're just a girl," he says, aghast. "That's what I keep saying," Buffy answers wearily. A high school sophomore when the show began, Buffy struggled to balance the responsibilities of school, friends, family, and saving the world — a heavy load for any 16-year-old to carry.

The interesting thing about Buffy was not that she was able to transcend her gender and become more than just a girl — it was that she challenged people to redefine their notions of what "just a girl" could be. Her chatter mixed banter about fashion and boys with discussion of weaponry and battle tactics, juxtaposing both facets of her life with casual ease: "Date. Shop. Go to school, hang out, save the world from unspeakable demons — I wanna do all that girl stuff," Buffy says. Courage and power weren't just masculine qualities that Buffy was able to co-opt; they were "girl stuff" that belonged to her as much as it belonged to anyone else.

Buffy was important not just because she was a woman with power, but because she never compromised herself while yielding it. As many superheroines choose to assert themselves either by acting masculine or by wielding their sexuality as a weapon, Buffy refused to do either one, and the subtext was powerful: Being feminine and being strong were not mutually exclusive. She was strong but vulnerable, sexual but respected, lethal but loving — she was "just a girl," but she could still save the world any day of the week and twice on Sundays, and we loved her for it.

More than anything else, Buffy was a horror story about growing up, where all the terrors and anxieties was given real and monstrous shape. High school was hell, her boyfriend turned into a monster after they slept together, and every other day seemed like the end of the world. It was life writ large through the fantastic metaphors of heroes and monsters, a trope that is often found in comics — fitting, perhaps, as Whedon recently began writing the canonical eighth season of Buffy as a Dark Horse comic book.

It's been a decade now since the debut of *Buffy*, a show that rode the third wave of feminism right into the heart of popular imagination, and as her story finds new life in comics, it's a good time consider the heroine state of the union. Ten years later, how do the leading ladies of comics and TV stand up the gauntlet of girl power Buffy threw down all those years ago? **B**



WONDER WOMAN, *Wonder Woman*

One of the oldest and most recognizable women in comic book history, Wonder Woman is nothing if not the classic superheroine icon, a character of such perfect strength and beauty that she often verges on divinity. Where Buffy's power was always balanced by her foibles and failings, Wonder Woman has always been more wonder than woman, a larger-than-life goddess who can't quite figure out how to be human despite her best efforts, which once included working at a fast food chain called Taco Whiz. As Buffy can attest from her time at the Double Meat Palace — fast food restaurants? Not a particularly good source of humanity.

SLAYER STATUS:



MANHUNTER, *Manhunter*

A lot of characters have taken the title of Manhunter during the years (eight, to be exact). They're typically male anti-heroes interested in hunting down "the most dangerous game." At first glance, the newest Manhunter, Kate Spencer, seems a rather unusual choice to take the name. She's a federal prosecutor and cynical single mom with no superpowers and an erstwhile cigarette addiction who decides she wants fight crime. Embittered by the constant miscarriages of justice she witnesses, Spencer eschews skimpy costumes for practical armor, takes to the streets armed with snark and power staff, and kicks some serious ass. Joss Whedon hasn't missed an issue.

SLAYER STATUS:



STARBUCK, *Battlestar Galactica*

Whether she's shooting Cylons out of the sky or punching her commanding officer in the face, Captain Kara Thrace is the best she is at what she does — violence, insubordination and heartbreak. Much like the resurrected Buffy of Season 6, Starbuck is a profoundly broken woman with a self-destructive streak, a survivor trying to deal with the pain of living not as a victim, but as a soldier. Rather being crippled by her personal traumas, Starbuck transforms them into a fury she dispenses with lethal elegance from her Viper plane. "What do you hear?" asks her commander as the debris of an obliterated enemy spatters across her bow. She replies, "Nothing but the rain."

SLAYER STATUS:



EMMA FROST, *Astonishing X-Men*

The former Hellfire Club member has certainly had her less heroic moments: kidnapping the X-Men, leading a team of teen villains to their deaths and tempting a married Scott Summers into a psychic affair upsetting one of the most iconic relationships in comics.

Much like the bad girl Slayer Faith, Emma's transformation from evil femme fatale to... less-evil femme fatale made her a virtual poster girl for rehabilitation, particularly when she rose from her checkered past as the villainous White Queen to be the co-headmaster of the Xavier Institute — a feat even more amazing than her ability to make Cyclops interesting.

SLAYER STATUS:

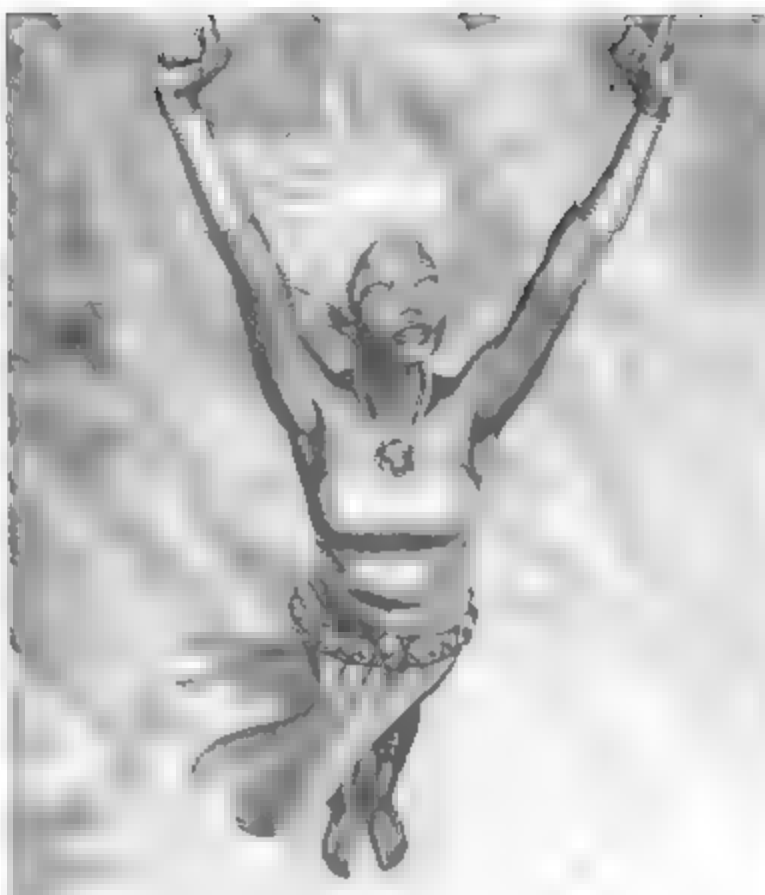




ORACLE, *Birds of Prey*

Tortured and shot, and paralyzed from the waist down by the Joker, Barbara Gordon, aka Batgirl, had every reason to think her life as a superhero was over. Gordon, however, decided it wasn't. From her wheelchair, she reinvented herself as Oracle, a hacker and information broker who proved indispensable in the DCU and even ran her own superhero team, *Birds of Prey*. Like Buffy's Willow, who was forced to fall back on her intellect and computer hacking after giving up magic, Oracle is proof positive that what defines a hero is not strength but spirit, and also that computer skills are very valuable in today's fast-changing workplace.

SLAYER STATUS:



STORM, *Black Panther*

The weather-wielding mutant is best known as the erstwhile leader of the X-Men, or perhaps the woman who beat Cyclops while she was de-powered. Storm was, quite simply, a force (of nature) to be reckoned with, and would have headlined any list of top heroines.

That is, until the lobotomizing pen of Reginald Hudlin had its way with the African goddess, turning her into a Stepford wife who allows men to silence her and who passes her fights to Hercules so she can cheer from the sidelines. In a subversion of one of the best characters in comics, Hudlin makes Storm a veritable Buffy Bot—a walking, talking facsimile of the character empty of everything important except her form.

SLAYER STATUS:



VERONICA MARS, *Veronica Mars*

What if... Buffy had been an amateur sleuth instead of a slayer? Trade the supernatural shtick for detective noir, add razor-sharp wit, and pump up the acting chops, and you'd have something like *Veronica Mars*. A pretty blonde who barely cracked 5 feet but still left the cops, robbers and spoiled rich kids of her small California town trembling in her wake, Veronica might be the smartest, savviest, most self-possessed teenage heroine ever to grace the small screen—better, even, than Buffy. Joss Whedon himself was compelled to call it the "Best Show Ever" on his blog, but despite its devoted fan base and near-universal critical acclaim, *Mars* was canceled this spring at the end of its third season.

SLAYER STATUS:



CLAIRE BENNET, *Heroes*

The most obvious and complete successor to Buffy is Claire Bennet, the high-indestructible cheerleader on NBC's *Heroes* who has a regenerative ability that could give Wolverine a run for his money. Claire, like Buffy, starts out as a popular high school girl whose normal life is turned upside down when she discovers she has incredible powers and a destiny beyond her choosing. Although being who she is means being alienated and rejected by the people around her, Claire ultimately "saves the cheerleader" by learning to accept herself, even if other people don't. "Maybe being different isn't the end of the world," Claire says. Buffy couldn't have said it better.

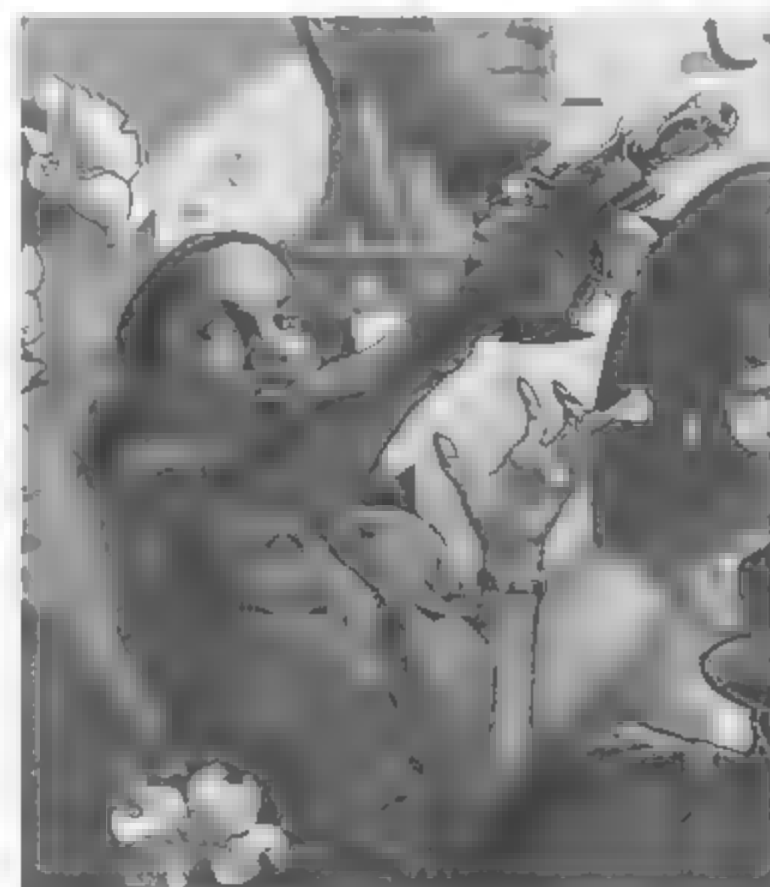
SLAYER STATUS:



KITTY PRYDE, *Astonishing X-Men*

One of the primary inspirations for the character of Buffy Kitty Pryde was a suburban teenager with the power to walk through solid objects when she joined the X-Men at the tender age of 13. Much like a certain other computer expert from Buffy, Kitty grew slowly from a timid noncombatant to a formidable member of the team, and she remains one of the few X-Men who has continued to change significantly—but organically—during the years. In the past year or so, Kitty recently rejoined the X-Men as a teacher and (finally) consummated her relationship with Colossus. In the pages of *Astonishing X-Men*, a title written by—you guessed it—Joss Whedon himself.

SLAYER STATUS:



RENEE MONTOYA, *Gotham Central* and *52*

Things weren't going very well for the former Gotham City police detective. Kidnapped by Two-Face, framed for murder, outed as a lesbian, and her partner murdered, Montoya traded in her badge at the end of *Gotham Central* and picked up the bottle, with no intention of putting it down. It was a downward spiral worthy of Buffy Season 8, and it wasn't until *52* that she got her shot at redemption, forging a friendship with The Question, who pulled her back into the land of the living and named her his heir before he succumbed to cancer. Not quite as fun as a musical number, but it had just as much feeling.

SLAYER STATUS:





BAKER'S DOZEN

THIRTEEN QUESTIONS WITH
FAMILY MAN AND NAT TURNER
CARTOONIST **KYLE BAKER**

BY CHRISTOPHER ALLEN
PHOTO BY TINA GREENBERG

1 You got an Eisner Award last year, and it seems you're receiving more praise from critics than ever before. Is it a combination of being more prolific? More accessible?

It probably has more to do with my making the kinds of books critics like. Many of my best-selling books were critically panned, and some of my critically acclaimed books don't actually sell. It's better to please yourself.

2 With *The Bakers*, you've found a way to do an entertaining, mass appeal, all-ages comic that remains individual in its voice. When did you realize you had comedic gold in your household?

The first time I watched *The Osbournes* on TV, I really related to the long-haired burnout dad who makes a living acting like a teenager.

3 Were there any specific cartoonists who influenced how you approached *The Bakers*?

I like Laurel and Hardy. They're not in a hurry to get the laugh. Sergio Aragones was the first guy to suggest I focus on more family cartoons, after he saw the first comic they were in. I should mention that I was also very influenced by Parker and Hart, who both recently passed away. You can see how I use the Johnny Hart template for bodies. The Kyle design is a combination of Hart, Fred Flintstone, and the Raid Bugs by Tex Avery. I also like Friz Freleng and Chuck Jones.

4 The majority of the gags in *The Bakers* seem to come from just watching your kids and having well-honed comedic instincts to know what's funny enough to recreate. After doing this for a couple of years, is there any concern with them growing up, or perhaps becoming more aware that they are sources of material for Dad?

I'll do it for as long as it's funny. You know, I have a million other ideas besides just *The Bakers*.

5 *The Bakers* is mainly seen through the eyes of Mom and Dad Baker, who are a mostly united front dealing with the messes and embarrassing comments of the kids. Your wife making you go get something from the store when you had just settled down to relax in a chair is about as much tension a reader will see between the two characters. Was there a conscious decision with *The Bakers* to focus on the family without making any kind of issue about where you live, the difficulties any spouse or parent faces, or what unique problems a multi-racial family might still face in 2007 America?

What I think is funniest about the cartoon is how universal the situations are. I stick with things

that happen to everyone, like baby's first step, or losing a tooth. My life's actually a lot more glamorous, but I don't know if anybody wants to read about me getting free trips to Barcelona or partying with rock bands.

6 What kind of work do you think you'd be doing today if you didn't have kids?

When I didn't have any kids, I didn't have to work. I spent my days at the beach.

7 What made you want to depict the story of Nat Turner?

I wanted to do a black history book, and the Nat Turner story has a lot of action and drama. The story also hasn't been told as often as other famous people like Harriet Tubman or Jackie Robinson. Also, Turner is controversial, and I always find that controversy sells.

8 Obviously being a parent has had a profound effect on you, as one would hope from any parent, and the sweetness and warmth of *The Bakers* is the most obvious example of this — a comic the whole family can enjoy. But is being a parent one of the reasons for doing *Nat Turner*? Are you trying to leave another kind of legacy in addition to the body of humorous work?

Believe it or not, the primary audience for cartoons is still young people. While there has been some growth in the ranks of middle-aged men who read comics and buy toys, the most popular cartoons are still the ones that target kids. You know who reads comics written for grown men? Critics. My biggest reason for doing *Nat Turner* is that I want to sell to schools and libraries. That market is slightly larger than comic shops.

9 What was the process of putting that book together? After reading it, especially the final two chapters, one would think the violence and fury that takes place — at length — would be very draining to draw. What kind of effect did it have, emotionally or even physically?

One of the reasons book two took so long was that it needed to build

the drama from book one. The most important parts of a story are the beginning and the ending. I had created a great opening with lots of drama, climaxing in a scene of a baby being eaten by a shark. This meant that for my big ending, I needed to *top* the shark-eating baby. Which I did. The biggest challenge is fitting about 60 killings into 90 pages. There's a lot of information to fit in these books, and you don't want it all to move too fast. You need to linger on emotional beats for dramatic effect. For example, the first killing takes about 10 pages to display, which means some other killings have to be condensed into less than a page. I think I did a good job of organizing an awful lot of information in a very small space. Turner's execution is almost a third of the book, and it builds to a strong emotional climax.

arc, which peaks with him leading a victorious army of 40 mounted soldiers, then he's defeated and executed. Talk about closure!

11 The long revolt sequence is by its nature the most exciting part of the book, but there seemed to be almost a Sam Peckinpah kind of logic to the images — chaotic violence in counterpoint to reminders of order and society, such as the drawings of ornate windows of the period. What were you trying to do in that sequence?

Trying to get some variety into 50 axe-murders. How many ways can you show someone being cut with an axe? It could have gotten boring. So you try montage. A closeup of a hand, a silhouette, a blood spatter, etc. I also like to have the text and art contradict each other. If Turner words describe killing someone

MY LIFE'S ACTUALLY A LOT MORE GLAMOROUS, BUT I DON'T KNOW IF ANYBODY WANTS TO READ ABOUT ME GETTING FREE TRIPS TO BARCELONA OR PARTYING WITH ROCK BANDS.



with a fence post, it's unnecessary to draw it. It's more interesting to contrast the description with a close-up of Turner's face.

12 *Nat Turner* ends abruptly, with no closing statement, no words from Turner to put his revolt into context or remind us of his purpose. Did you intend to leave it to readers to make their own determinations, or is there something you really want readers to take away from this work?

I wanted to tell the facts accurately. I want this book in schools. About the closing statement: Turner's last quoted line in the book compares him to Christ, and the execution scene that follows is intended to evoke the stations of the cross. Crowds taunt Turner as he serenely accepts his fate.

10 One difficulty with biographical works is that the people who put them together are often compelled, or forced, to smooth off or overlook the rough edges of the subject, or end their story with the most significant triumph, forgetting later failures. Human lives aren't tidy, three-act plays. *Nat Turner* had a pretty short life, and it ended not long after the revolt, but were there any elements of his story you struggled to find a place for and ultimately discarded?

I had toyed with illustrating his hallucinations. He described some wild religious visions, but I felt they needed to be illustrated in color. Turner's life actually did have a solid three-act structure, which is what attracted me to the tale. There's this beautiful dramatic

13 So what's next for you? I have a book called *How to Draw Stupid* coming out next year from Watson-Guptill. I'm also making an animated *King David* feature through my animation studio. I plan to eventually adapt all of my books to animation. And I do daily updates on my blog and website at kylebaker.com, so there's about a trillion cartoons there now.

POP QUIZ



Mark Millar

The Scottish writer has been attached to a lot of high-profile titles in the past few years, and while it's been great exposure for the 38-year-old, big projects mean big pressure. Sure, he might have written his way through *Ultimate X-Men*, *The Ultimates* and *Civil War*, but how will he fare against the Comic Foundry Pop Quiz?

AS TOLD TO TIM LEONG

1. WHAT WERE YOU LIKE IN GRADE SCHOOL?

A kind of combination of both class swot and class clown. I was quite academic but came from a very poor area, and so I hid the academic streak very carefully. I generally scored well in tests but consciously made sure I made smart-arsed comments as much as possible so I wouldn't be recognized as especially good at my schoolwork. **This was both sneaky and an essential survival skill** in the west of Scotland back in the 1980s. My main thing at school was pranks. There was a famous murder in the UK when I was 16, and I pinned wanted posters of a friend all over the school building. My best friend, a guy called Tam Lally, was my favorite target. I spent a week making Tam Lally masks for the entire class to wear one day and even had the teacher wear one for hours one time. We really just tried to break one another on a psychological level, constantly and without mercy. But it was great fun.

2. WHAT'S YOUR PORN NAME?

Darkie O'Hare. Yes, our cat was called Darkie when I was a toddler. But it was the '70s and simpler times. Everybody had a black cat called Darkie.

3. WHICH CELEB WOULD PLAY YOU IN A MOVIE?

A lot of people say I look like Michael Flatley, the Riverdance guy. **But I suspect it's just the emerging man-boobs.**



4. WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST REGRET?

I'd have liked my parents to have lived to see me do this because they would have been into it. I'd also have liked my dad to have seen me get married and have a family. One of my brothers told me recently he'd been worried I was gay because I was always drawing and dressing up as superheroes when I was wee, which I thought was hilarious. So I would have liked him to have seen that I was merely theatrical.

5. WHAT'S YOUR GO-TO KARAOKE SONG?

Two years ago I did "Bohemian Rhapsody" on my own in a karaoke bar at the Marvel Christmas party. It's probably the most difficult karaoke song to perform, and I can't say I rose to the occasion. **I was drunk, staggering about and screeching this right in the faces of the interns.** Some of the staff looked afraid, others just ashamed. Fortunately, booze blots out a lot of my memories.



6. WHO'S THE COOLEST PERSON IN YOUR CELLPHONE?

My daughter. She's eight and just got her first cellphone, but none of her friends have one yet. My wife and I are the only people she calls.

7. WHAT WOULD YOUR LAST MEAL BE?

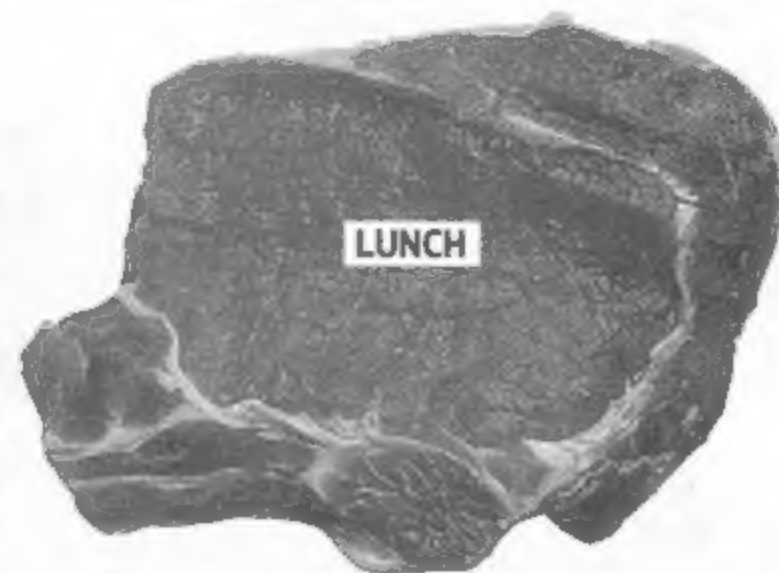
If it were death row I would ask for one of those Indian meals with 350 courses or something. Just to prolong my life a few more days.



8. WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE LITERARY SCOT?

- A) SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
- B) SIR JAMES BARRIE
- C) ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Conan Doyle. Without question. I've been a huge Holmes buff since I was 7 and, again, used to dress up like him. A big fan of the Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce era. My friends would be playing Star-sky and Hutch, and I'd appear with a pipe, a silk dressing gown and a cravat with my hair gelled down. **God, no wonder Dad thought I was gay.**



9. IF YOU WERE STRANDED ON A DESERTED ISLAND, WHICH OF YOUR FORMER ARTISTS WOULD YOU EAT FIRST?

- A) BRYAN HITCH
- B) FRANK QUITELY
- C) J.G. JONES
- D) STEVE MCNIVEN

A very difficult question. Hitch and McNiven are big, and the meat would last a long time, but they're both sitting around all day and have spread a bit, so I don't know how good the quality of their rump would be. I think they'd both be quite fatty. That said, Hitch drinks a lot of wine, so I feel he'd be juicy at least. McNiven's from a cold part of Canada, and I can't imagine his circulation is that great. He looks kind of chewy. Quitely is completely out of the running. **I've seen him (semi) naked on many occasions,** and he's built like Ultimate Spider-Man. He weighs about 60 pounds and has consumed so many illegal chemicals over the years that he'd be as poisoned as British beef. So my choice would have to be J.G. He's the oldest of the batch by half a decade, but he looks after himself. I'm obsessed with meat these days. I was a strict vegetarian from ages 19 to 36 but started eating meat again last year and love it. I eat pretty much the same thing every day: a chop and eggs for breakfast, a steak for lunch and a nice bit of chicken for dinner. Usually, I stick a lamb's heart or a bit of kidney on for me and the dog at night and have this as a snack. My family thinks it's disgusting, but I've honestly never felt better. Seriously, it's great. I saw my brother eat a pig's trotter once. That was disgusting.

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